Dissent

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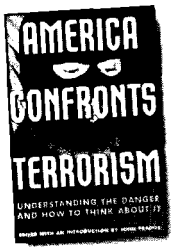

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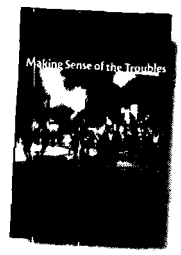

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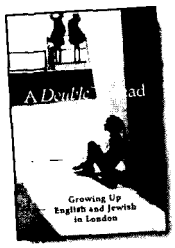

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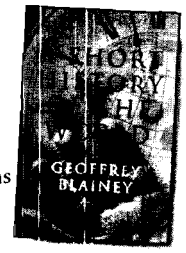

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Editor's Page

Around the world, right now, leftists of all sorts are engaged in arguments about the use of force. In our last issue, we focused on the question of humanitarian intervention, and all our writers, though they were a very diverse group, argued for the necessity of a military response to genocide and ethnic cleansing. In this issue, we are publishing a group of articles that address the question of what happens after the killing fields have, one way or another, been shut down. How can some form of political order be restored? How can justice be done? Who are the restorers and doers? Whose voice and hand should be authoritative? And how can the rest of us help? We can't answer all these questions, only begin to think about them. For anyone who supports the use of force (sometimes), they are necessary questions. Once you intervene, you take on responsibilities. ■ September 11 raised a set of different but parallel questions, requiring a similar intellectual/political engagement. Terrorism is one way of using force; the "war against terrorism" is another. I am sure that there are alternatives to the first: even the fiercest and most fanatical of religious zealots can pursue their goals without planning mass murder. There are no excuses for terrorism; along with Benjamin Ross, I even doubt that there are any "root causes," at least in the standard left use of that term, where a supposedly deep understanding of where the terrorists are coming from sometimes serves as an excuse for what they do. ■ But it is a question for us, in this issue of *Dissent*, whether there are alternatives to the "war against terrorism." Iris Young and Daniele Archibugi argue that a globalist response, working through the United Nations, would have been better than the largely American or American/Afghan war. They differ, however, from other people on the left who defended a similar position (and who are criticized in my own piece and also in Jeffrey C. Isaac's) because they take the security issue, the need to prevent the next attack, very seriously and respond in a concrete way. The dangers of American unilateralism are also addressed by Todd Gitlin, who has some fresh things to say about how our hegemonic power might be used in (mixing my metaphors) less myopic hands. Murray Hausknecht worries rightly about the effects on civil liberty and oppositional politics of the war at home. And Amy Burke, claiming that a national crisis is a time for solidaristic social policies, mourns the opportunity that George W. Bush is sure to miss. ■ For me, the highlight of this issue is Kanan Makiya's brilliant essay—memoir, analysis, meditation—on September 11 and the Arab world. Read it.

MW

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DANIEL M. FRIEDENBERG

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FOREWORD BY HOWARD ZINN

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The Arab World After Sept. 11

Kanan Makiya

A WEEK OR SO AFTER the collapse of the World Trade Center Towers and the attack on the Pentagon, I had this conversation with a friend who shall remain unnamed.

"They could not have been Arabs," he said.

"Of course they were. Read the list of names. Look at the pictures."

"No Arab is capable of planning an operation like this."

My friend is an Arab himself. He was, a long time ago as a young man, an activist in the Al Da'wa Party, an Iraqi Islamist organization that waged an underground war in the 1980s against the Ba'thist regime of Saddam Hussein after all secular, nationalist, military, and liberal forms of opposition had collapsed. The oppressiveness of his own government drove him to Islamic politics at a time when Iraq had launched a war against the Islamic Republic of Iran, a war that was being supported, from the middle 1980s onward, by the United States. For him, in those days, these two things were connected—the intolerable brutality of the Hussein regime and American support for it. Hounded out of Iraq, he has spent fifteen years as a refugee hopping from one country to the next. Had he been born in Saudi Arabia or fallen into a fringe radical Islamic circle in Egypt sometime in the 1990s, he could very well have ended up as one of the hijackers.

I make this statement not by way of judging my friend. For a whole variety of reasons, he does not identify with the perpetrators of September 11. Nor would I call his actions against the Iraqi regime in the 1980s terrorism—he will not be too specific about what he did in those days, but I surmise he was part of an Islamist plot to assassinate Hussein, and was one of the lucky few who succeeded in hightailing it to Iran after the plot was uncovered. Today he is a happily married man, and if he could hear me saying that he might have, in some earlier incarnation, been one of the September 11 terrorists, he would get very upset.

And yet his anger these days, like that of the September 11 hijackers, is directed at the United States. My friend justifies his anger by his belief—shared with the overwhelming majority of Iraqis today—that the United States deliberately left the Iraqi tyrant in place after the Gulf War, and then imposed a regime of sanctions that made the people of Iraq pay the price of Hussein's actions in 1990. He and I often have arguments about U.S. foreign policy over Iraq. Like most Iraqis, he gets angry when I say that this is not the case: the United States wants nothing more than that Hussein be replaced through some sort of palace coup; it is simply unwilling to pay the price and shoulder the responsibility of doing the job itself. And it fears or does not have any confidence in structural change in Iraq, that is, in the possibility of an entirely different system of power sharing in the country. He counters by saying that to replace Hussein, after dispatching half a million soldiers halfway across the world to push him out of Kuwait, would be like batting an eyelash for the richest and most powerful country in the world. He reminds me that Bush senior called upon the Iraqi people to rise up against Hussein, and when they did so, turned his back on them. It is at this point that I run out of good arguments and start going on about how ignorant most Arabs are of how decision making works in Washington, and so on and so forth.

This article was originally given as a lecture at the New School for Social Research in January 2002.

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I make this hypothetical statement about my friend in order to illustrate a number of points. The first is that it is important to think of the kind of people who perpetrated September 11, however horrific and bestial their behavior, as normal, perhaps even ordinary, people, who have turned to terrorism for reasons that we need to understand; they were not born terrorists, nor are they inclined toward violent solutions to their problems by the tenets of their religion. I don't want for a second to excuse or justify what was done on September 11—only to insist on the urgency of understanding what it is we are dealing with, if for no other reason than to be able to fight it more effectively.

The other reason I bring up my friend's denial of Arab involvement is because he is not alone. A very large number of Arabs and Muslims continue to refuse to accept that their coreligionists or fellow Arabs were involved on September 11. This refusal comes effortlessly, naturally almost, like the deeply distressing but widely accepted story in Egypt and the Gulf Arab countries that Jews or Israelis, not Muslims, were behind what happened in New York and Washington.

On the face of it, the statement that the hijackers could not have been Arabs because no Arab is capable of planning an operation like this sounds simple, a naive comment on the facts. But it is nothing of the sort. If we but knew how to unpack all that produced it—by no means an easy task—I suggest it would encapsulate tendencies in Arab politics that have been decades in the making. Notice, for instance, the element of self deprecation and inner defeat implied by the idea that Arabs are not capable of pulling off such a fantastic feat of planning and organization; it had to be someone like the Israelis, who have an interest in making "us" look bad, and who are, everyone knows, very smart. What is going on here? Is it only that my friend is so horrified by the event that his first instinct is to take distance from it? This would be a reasonably positive political impulse, however wrongly founded. Does my friend's denial, in other words, arise out of a sense of shame or deep anxiety that the perpetrators might in fact be Arabs or Muslims? On the first day, I certainly hoped against all hope that the hijackers would turn out to be some homegrown group of Timothy McVeighs. Or is there, in my friend's denial, perhaps layered onto his shame, overtones of admiration for the feat of the hijackers?

Whatever my friend's reasons, the fact is that most Arabs, and some Muslims, have not yet come to terms with what happened on September 11. Note that I said most Arabs and some Muslims. That is because we should not let the initial focus of George W. Bush's campaign in Afghanistan obscure the fact that September 11, whatever else it may be, is an outgrowth of the problems of the modern Middle East, not the whole Islamic world as bin Laden would like us to believe. Not one of the hijackers or their al-Qaeda bosses is an Afghan. They are all Arabs who have exported their problems to that unfortunate country. Facing a civilizational challenge such as they have not had to face since the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the Arab world is hunkered down, unaware that in the years to come the greatest price to be paid for the apocalyptic acts unleashed upon New York and Washington on September 11 will be borne, not by Americans, but by them, individuals of Arab or Muslim origin wherever they might live.

This price is much higher than a bombing campaign in Afghanistan, followed perhaps by one in Iraq, or efforts to hunt down Arab terrorists from the suburbs of Boston and Hamburg to downtown Cairo and Karachi. Nor is the price going to be paid by being the victims of the kinds of humiliating slurs and racist attacks that rose so sharply everywhere in the West after September 11. It is the much greater price brought about when large numbers of people continue to respond to what happened on September 11 the way my friend did, by sinking more deeply into denial, and more deeply into a sense of their own victimhood, whether at the hands of the United States, or Israel, or the world economic system, or what nowadays is called globalization. It almost no longer matters which agent is held responsible.

The "anti-Americanism" of the so-called Arab street that we saw manipulated by Osama

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bin Laden is built on this sense of victimhood and abdication of responsibility that I have been talking about; it is not a new phenomenon for the Middle East but rather the latest and most virulent variant of an idea nurtured originally by secular, nationalist Arab intellectuals like myself in the immediate aftermath of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. In those days it went under a variety of different labels: anti-imperialism, anti-Zionism, Arab socialism, pan-Arabism. Whatever else one might say about these older labels, at least they had as their point of departure genuine grievances, some of which, of course, were more legitimate than others.

Among the legitimate grievances, priority of place must be given to the profound injustice caused by the real dispossession of millions of Palestinians that accompanied the birth and consolidation of the state of Israel in 1948. In the hands of Arab nationalists and leftist "anti-imperialists" of my generation (of whom I was one), this sense of grievance was not channeled into the hard work of building civil societies and expanding civil liberties in opposition to the existing tyrannical regimes—such as happened in Latin America in the 1980s. Democratization began, and even took off in some parts of that continent in the 1980s but not in the Middle East. Why?

Could it be because, unlike Latin Americans, we remained stuck or burdened with a "national question," namely a situation where the collective rights of a whole people to self-determination were still, until the agreement reached in Oslo at least, being denied in theory and in practice? Certainly that is part of the answer. But it is also the kind of answer that can all too quickly be turned into an excuse. The fact remains that my generation failed even to pursue issues of individual and civil liberties from the 1960s right through the 1980s. Our failure left a vacuum that was increasingly filled by a conspiratorial view of history, one reinforced by such tyrannical regimes as Hussein's or Hafez al-Assad's, a view of history that ascribed all the ills of our own world to either the Great Satan, America, or the Little Satan, Israel.

The dangerous, unstated corollary of this view was the notion that "we Arabs" had no, or hardly any, agency to change the terribly unjust way that the world works. Increasingly, Arabs began to see themselves as the eternal victims of the second half of the twentieth century, consigned to a Sisyphean struggle against absolute or satanic injustice. Lost was a sense of ourselves as authentic political agents capable of aiming at concrete and gradual gains in the political arena.

IT IS IMPORTANT to remember that Arabs are not the only ones to wrap themselves in the comforting mantle of victimhood; the modern Israeli sense of identity was, after all, forged on the foundations of the Holocaust just as surely as Palestinian national identity was forged by Israel's harsh treatment of Palestinians under occupation. Such symmetries (and there are many others) have created a powerful complex of victimhood that undermines reconciliation efforts like those in Oslo, and that is applicable to one degree or another to all peoples of the Middle East (Palestinians, Israelis, Kurds, Armenians, Chaldean Christians, Turkomans, Shi'is, and Sunnis). It is very difficult to make peace between peoples when at some primal level they are still in competition with one another over who has suffered the most and whose cause is more just.

Among Arabs in particular, especially after Israel's stunning and unexpected victory in the six-day war of 1967, this complex became the driving force of politics and culture; it grew into the foundation upon which such regimes as Hussein's Iraq and Assad's Syria were built. From the hands of secular Arab nationalists, the murderous anti-American ideology was passed on to previously marginal religious zealots. In 1979, it fused with anti-shah sentiments to become one of the animating forces of the Iranian revolution. In the wake of that seminal event, it overwhelmed all other doctrines in major sections of the Islamic movement from Algeria to Pakistan.

Any "politics of victimhood" is inherently unreasonable. But in the Arab part of the Middle East that unreasonableness (as typical of Israelis as of Kurds, for instance) is fueled by failure. The Arab world is a potpourri of collapsing economies—mass unemployment overseen by ever more repressive regimes. This is

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a world that has been defeated in one war after another with Israel. It is a world that has been torn apart by coups d'état, occupations, intifadas, wars, and civil wars—which in tiny Lebanon alone killed 140,000 people, wounded 400,000, and made refugees of one in every three Lebanese. The eight-year-long Iraq-Iran War, to take another defining event of our times, has killed more people than all the Arab-Israeli wars rolled into one; its effect, on the countries that waged it, was no less than World War I on, say, France or Germany.

The extraordinary depths of human suffering in Iraq today, after two Gulf wars and ten years of sanctions, is simply a special case in an ocean of misery. The problem is that in all the indices—economic, political, and social—the problems became worse in the decade that followed the Gulf War. When one thinks of the emergence of bin Laden in the 1990s in the Middle East from this point of view, one must think of the emergence of Hitler from the rubble of Germany after the Second World War. The economic lot of the average Palestinian is today orders of magnitude worse than it was when the Oslo peace process started. Nothing symbolizes how much worse these problems have become since the hope-filled days of Oslo than the survival of the regime of Saddam Hussein. It is no longer capable of projecting its power outside its own borders, perhaps, but it has been given, for all practical purposes, free license to do what it wants with its own citizenry. And it is given this license under the hypocritical gaze of the whole world, which sits passively and watches. Is it any wonder that my Iraqi friend, like so many other Iraqis, has grown so bitter?

The mix of post–1967 wars, revolutions, occupations, acts of ethnic cleansing, intifadas, and civil wars with the condition of being a victim creates a murderously explosive brew. We saw that brew ignite in 1990, with the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. On September 11, 2001, it did so again.

I HAVE BEEN speaking of a failure of systems and institutions, armies and states. But in many ways the greatest failure of all has been intellectual, specifically a failure of the intelligentsia—people like myself, writers, professors, artists, journalists, and so forth—who, with few exceptions, failed to meet the challenges of their strife-ridden times. In particular, they failed to challenge the region's and their respective regimes' wildest and most paranoid fantasies. If anything, they sometimes buttressed them by becoming propagandists for political parties and armed-struggle organizations and by refusing, more generally, to break out of nationalist paradigms—for instance, by extending the hand of solidarity to their counterparts in Israel.

Instead, many of us who were formed politically by the 1967 war acted as "rejectionist" critics who largely excoriated their own regimes for being insufficiently anti-Zionist or anti-imperialist. Lost in all of this, as I said, was the hard work of creating a modern, rights-based political order out of or from within those very regimes, one that could eventually form the basis for a more widely based, more general prosperity. In the absence of that kind of alternative focus, in the thick of all that endlessly self-pitying victimizing rhetoric, is it any wonder that despairing, young, middle-class individuals like Muhammad Atta and Ziad al-Jarrah, two of the men who flew the planes into the World Trade Center buildings, men who are a generation younger than I am, gravitated toward ever more radical and eventually terrorist activities aimed at smiting the demonized Other?

Atta and al-Jarrah lived through—on the ground, not in exile or in the West—the practical consequences of the failure of my generation's well-intentioned dreams and hopes. We, by and large, either sold out to our homegrown autocracies and tyrannies or packed our bags and left. We went on to do things like turning London into a new cultural capital of the Middle East, with five daily Arabic newspapers. Arab businesses and commerce operate today out of many European cities. But the generation that followed ours mostly stayed behind; they had to fight the wars, and dodge the bullets, and therefore in an important sense, they had to pay the price for our failure, a price that we were unwilling to pay or fortunate enough not to have to pay.

Ziad al-Jarrah, for example, was born in 1975, the year the Lebanese civil war started.

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I am twenty-six years older than he and had already spent years cutting my teeth on Palestinian politics. After September 11, his family claimed that he was sheltered from the ravages of the civil war, although that is hard to believe of anyone who was growing up during the 1980s in Lebanon. What his good parents probably meant to say is that he was spared a direct experience of its horrors. After all, they had sent him to the relatively more sheltered environment of a Christian school in Beirut. I went to an American Jesuit High school in Baghdad, some 75 percent of whose students were Muslim. A key difference between us, however, was that the "isms" that my generation had believed in had all died by the time al-Jarrah was growing up—Arabism, nationalism, socialism, Marxism, third worldism. He knew failures in his bones, so to speak. He may not have been able to theorize about them, and he may not even have accepted fully that they were failures. But growing up and seeing the streets of Beirut taken over by gangs of young men toting Kalashnikovs and extorting "protection" money from ordinary folk in the name of these high minded "isms" teaches a young, well-intentioned, and probably highly moralistic young man things no book or theoretical treatise can teach. People imbibe these lessons without even knowing that they are doing so, and, in the case of specially dedicated and conscientious people, they soon seek alternatives.

One "ism" had not yet been fully tested out and proved bankrupt by what men—and they were largely men—had done with it on the ground: political Islam. When did al-Jarrah become attracted to this new and rising ideology fueled by the success of the 1979 Iranian revolution? We don't really know. We know that he went to Hamburg in the mid-1990s, probably sent by his family to continue his studies. We know that something happened to him there. We can speculate that in Hamburg he became acquainted for the first time with the phantasmagoric vision of an Islamic utopia that would redress all wrongs. In need of answers and a degree of certainty in his life, al-Jarrah found the Islamism of the Hamburg cell that recruited him. He probably went through a long process of acculturation and adjustment into the cult-like environment of his new reality. Some of the statements made by his German girlfriend and his family do indicate a change in approach and behavior—the kind of thing that happens to young people when they are recruited into cults.

Al-Jarrah himself almost certainly did not join in the butchery of the Lebanese civil war, euphemistically called the "armed struggle," during the years of his adolescence. And that is what his shocked family was trying to say to the news reporters banging on their doors. Nonetheless, al-Jarrah surely grew up suffering from its corrosive effects. For him, I suspect, there was nothing left to believe in, nothing that had not been tried out in some form or other in the streets of Cairo, Beirut, Ramallah, and Baghdad. Nothing, that is, except faith in a holy cause, which so often in politics is a substitute for lost faith in ourselves.

IT IS STRIKING to notice that although what I have said applies to Lebanese who experienced an Israeli war and occupation on top of their own terrible civil war, to Palestinians living in Gaza and the West Bank, and to Iraqis suffering under an intolerable regime that they blame the United States for not doing away with during the Gulf War, precious little of it applies to someone such as Osama bin Laden or even to some of his key lieutenants such as Ayman al Zawahiry. Saudis have, after all, not been colonized or occupied by anybody; they have one of the highest per capita income levels outside of the Western world, and bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia from Afghanistan in 1989 neither defeated nor a victim. In fact, he returned a kind of hero, flushed with victory over the Soviet Union.

Unlike the post–1967 generation of Arabs formed by the Arab-Israeli conflict, bin Laden's wrath is directed not at Israel , but at the whole post–Ottoman Arab order. Bin Laden, even more than Saddam Hussein during the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis, is an unconvincing convert to the Palestinian cause, which ranked at the bottom of his list of grievances against the United States in his October 2001 videotape. What explains the 1990s emergence onto the center stage of Arab politics of a terrorist "grand alliance" led by such a man? I would suggest that we are looking at something new in Arab

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politics, something perhaps analogous to what Russia went through in the second half of the nineteenth century with the rise of revolutionary nihilist movements described by Dostoyevsky in his novel *The Demons*. The revolt of bin Laden and his cohorts, like that of Dostoyevsky's characters in that novel, is a nihilistic, all-out revolt of the sons against the fathers who made all the compromises and brokered all the dirty deals that created the constellation of ultimately failed states that we see today in the Middle East. The great-uncle of bin Laden's right-hand man, Ayman al Zawahiry, for instance, was the first secretary general of the Arab League set up in the wake of the fall of the Ottoman Empire, while bin Laden himself is a son of the megarich generation of Saudis, who (quite literally in the case of bin Laden's father) built modern Saudi Arabia. Such would-be leaders are a very far cry from the men who have dominated the Arab political scene since 1967, men like Yassir Arafat or thugs like Saddam Hussein, Muammar Qaddafi, and Hafez al-Assad, all of whom rose to power from lowly beginnings in nondescript towns and villages through political parties or state institutions like the army and the secret police.

And if it is not the Arab-Israeli conflict, what is the driving force of this movement's bid for leadership of the Arab world? In his 1998 statement, issued after Bill Clinton's pointless missile attack on al-Qaeda's training camps in Afghanistan—the statement in which he called on Muslims to kill Americans wherever they might be in the world—bin Laden put at the top of his list of grievances the fact that the Saudi regime allowed non-Muslims, namely American troops during the Gulf War, to pollute "the land of Muhammad," a phrase he used again in his 2001 video.

The psycho-political makeup of a man who cares more about the polluting effect of an American presence in Arabia than anything else that has been going on around him for the last thirty years is very different from that of a desperate suicide bomber in Gaza or the West Bank who lashes out because he has nothing left to lose. I can't think of what to compare it with coming out of the Middle East in recent years. Needless to say, bin Laden's scapegoating of the United States is not new. It intersects with the mainstream discourse of victimhood and victimization prevalent since the 1967 war. But bin Laden's style of reasoning, the motivating impulse behind his actions, the application of notions of purity to parts or perhaps even the whole of the Arabian peninsula in modern times, this is strange and in need of explanation.

Obsession with questions of purity are a characteristic feature of Wahhabism, the eighteenth-century creed founded by the fanatical reformer Muhammad ibn al-Wahhab (1703–1787), who went on to ally himself with the tribal warlords that eventually became the Saudi dynasty. The creed was unknown in Pakistan or Afghanistan or anywhere outside the Arabian peninsula before Saudi oil wealth spread it around. So extreme is the original form of this puritan, image-hating Muslim sect that it views all non-Muslims—as well as non-Wahhabi Muslims like me, by the way—as a form of "pollution." Osama bin Laden not only grew up with this ideology, which is taught today in all Saudi schools, but he turned it against his own regime when it violated its own principles during the Gulf War.

Through the oil wealth and power of the Saudi dynasty, and because it could always count on its alliance with the United States, Wahhabism has been able to spread its regressive, archconservative vision of Islam around the world, both within the Islamic world and to the West. Billions of Saudi dollars are pumped every year into madrassas and mosques in support of the very particular type of Wahhabi Islam that parades itself as the real thing. It is those billions, not bin Laden's allegedly great personal fortune, that directly and indirectly financed al-Qaeda, camped out in war-torn Afghanistan.

But there is still a problem of transition, of understanding how bin Laden got to his radical *jihadi* worldview from the Wahhabism of his education and his experience fighting the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s. The seminal moment here, where so many of the roots of September 11 intersect, is the Gulf crisis of 1990-1991. There is no easy explana-

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tion, no one wrong or great act of historical injustice that lies behind what happened on September 11. And yet many of the threads lead back to that 1990-1991 crisis, to how the war against Hussein was waged, and above all to the irresponsible way in which it was left unfinished, with the whole population of Iraq left to fester. The Palestinian question, foundational though it is for the peace of the whole region, is just one of those threads. Moreover, we know from the bits and pieces of personal information that have begun to surface that the experience of 1990-1991 was a turning point for bin Laden himself.

Shortly after bin Laden returned a hero from Afghanistan, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. Bin Laden reacted in a very interesting way: he called upon the Saudi ruling elite into which he had been born to let him deploy his "Arab Afghan" fighters to expel Hussein from Kuwait. Battle-hardened by their fight against the Russian Army, they would find the Iraqi troops—who did not want to be in Kuwait in the first place—a pushover, so he must have argued. The offer was turned down. The Saudis preferred to pay the United States to fight the Gulf War on their behalf. And the United States, having become accustomed to tailoring its policies in the Middle East to autocratic, authoritarian regimes of this kind, was happy to oblige.

In retrospect, it is worth examining bin Laden's 1990 position more carefully. To begin with, it was highly unusual. I say unusual because there were few Arabs who held the position that Arab should fight Arab and, if necessary, die by the thousands to expel the Iraqi invader from Kuwait in 1990. In fact I know of only two: bin Laden and myself. One of the biggest shocks I have had to contend with in the aftermath of September 11 is the realization that on this existential question of Arab politics, bin Laden and I, coming as we do from opposite sides of the political spectrum, shared what amounted to the same extremely unpopular position concerning the seriousness of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and what ought to be done about it.

My position came straight out of the experience of writing about the Ba'thist regime in *Republic of Fear*, published in 1989. My Palestinian, Lebanese, or Jordanian counterparts, on the other hand, were understandably preoccupied with Israel and its policies in the region; they did not feel threatened by the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait the way Kuwaitis or Iraqis suffering under Hussein did. A homegrown tyrant was not the absolute center of their universe. Perhaps, large numbers of Arab intellectuals allowed themselves to think, Iraq's much touted military strength would act as a counterweight to Israeli arrogance, forcing Israel to make concessions it would not otherwise make. There were those who argued that Kuwait was hardly worth fighting for, being an artificial creation of the oil companies. More technocratic types convinced themselves that Hussein could be prevailed upon by the Arab league to leave of his own accord. They tended to think that negotiations over Iraqi withdrawal before the outbreak of hostilities failed only because of American perfidy and desire to pursue a war strategy at all costs. In this country, Noam Chomsky, among others, made the same argument.

Hussein, however, was counting on such sentiments, on the acquiescence of a world that he knew to be psychologically defeated. He would not leave Kuwait because he did not believe anyone would force him out. Who could have predicted the coalition that Bush senior put together in 1990? The America that Hussein knew had been defeated in Vietnam; it had been humiliated in Iran; and when it tried under Ronald Reagan to intervene in Lebanon, it took one deadly car bomb to send the marines scuttling back to their ships. This America looked weak and irresolute in the eyes of Hussein. And so he gambled everything on its inaction over the issue of Kuwait.

Hussein was wrong about the United States in 1990, but he was right about the state of the Arab world. Once the fighting started in January of 1991, and it became clear that Arab armies were there as window dressing, I changed my position and called upon the Allied coalition to finish the war by taking out the tyrant and opening up the possibility of democratic change in the Middle East.

Bin Laden also changed his position, but in the opposite direction. He turned his wrath against the puppet master United States,

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which was manipulating the Saudi puppet, as he now saw the relation between the two. How bin Laden today rationalizes his apocalyptic vision of the clash between the "true" Islam that he claims to represent and Western civilization must be distinguished from how he arrived at it. Regarding his rationalizations and use, or abuse, of the Quran to justify what he certainly thinks of as a war of civilizations—that has to be the subject of another piece (See my article "Manual For A 'Raid' " in the January 16, 2002, *New York Review of Books*). It is enough to say that his use of the Quran is about as Islamic as the use of the Sodom and Gomorah story to justify a nuclear attack on New York would be Jewish.

There can be no rational exchange with such a perverted reading of texts; the very attempt to do so bolsters the project of the perpetrators of the heinous act of September 11, which is to blur the lines that separate a terrorist sect like al-Qaeda from the millions of ordinary Muslims and Arabs in the world. One needs to distinguish between an exchange like that and an engagement with the "culture" of anti-Americanism in the Middle East that bin Laden exploits to broaden his appeal. The former involves a cultlike distortion of reality that is impossible to reason with; the latter involves an amorphous, but nonetheless real sentiment, grounded in desperate and extreme conditions of hopelessness, defeat, occupation, and, in a case like Iraq, gradual societal meltdown.

Bin Laden's apocalyptic vision, like that of the Russian nihilists of the nineteenth century, is not going to materialize. His defeat was never really in doubt. The important question is, what will his demise mean for a world whose own failures are responsible for creating bin Laden in the first place?

To react to September 11, as some Arabs and Muslims are doing (and not a few liberal and Western voices), by demanding that "Americans should ask themselves why they are so hated in the world," is to make a concession, to provide a justification, however unwittingly, for bin Laden's kind of politics. The logic is the same as the "linkage" dreamed up by Saddam Hussein when he tried to get the Arab world to believe that he had occupied Kuwait in 1990 in order to liberate Palestine. The only difference is that if the argument was intellectually vacuous then, it is a thousand times more so now. Worse than being wrong, however, it is morally bankrupt, to say nothing of being totally counterproductive.

The real problem is not about Islam and its relation with the West; it is about the mess that the Arab component of the Muslim world in particular is in, a component that is a mere 17 percent of the whole. Aziz Ali, the Iraqi alter ego of Bob Dylan, wrote a lyric in the 1930s, that went *Da' illi beena, minna wa feena*, "the disease that is in us, is from us and within us." I think Ali had the right idea. Against this kind of enemy, George W. Bush's "war against terrorism" will do very little. We have to do it ourselves. Muslims and Arabs, not Americans, must today be on the frontlines of a new kind of war, one worth waging *for our own salvation and our own souls*. That, as some Muslim scholars will argue, is the true meaning of *jihad*, a meaning hijacked by terrorists and suicide bombers and all those who applaud or excuse them. To exorcise what bin Laden has done in the name of all Muslims and Arabs is the civilizational challenge that Arabs and Muslims, wherever they may live, face at the dawn of the twenty-first century. ●

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Globalization and Its Discontents

An African Tragedy

If man were to begin by studying himself, he would see how incapable he is of going beyond himself. How could it be possible for a part to know the whole? But he may perhaps aspire to a knowledge of at least those parts which are on the same scale as himself. But the different parts of the world are all so closely linked and related together that I hold it to be impossible to know one without knowing the other and without knowing the whole.

—Blaise Pascal, *Fragment* 72

David E. Apter

ALTHOUGH PROTEST against globalization continues to mount, most of its foes' indictments are so sweeping as to render real solutions nugatory. Undiscriminating critiques undermine the opposition and distort its purposes. This is a pity. Fringe violence aside, such protests are the only way to register serious objections to a process that proceeds under its own steam, yet generates discontents of great practical and moral importance.

To blame all developmental ills on globalization is to demonize it rather than to understand its complexities. The truth is that if one can't live with globalization, one can't live without it either. Its consequences are many and diverse. But the devil is in the details. And details are not the concern of most protesters.

The same criticisms apply to most supporters of globalization. Their Olympian spirit keeps their heads in the clouds. Despite professions of pragmatism, they are swept along by hubris regarding the benign effects of the market. Their market models ignore the social overhead costs of global development and its impact in real terms: population displacement and dispersion, loss of patrimonies, marginalization of sectors of the population, social polarization, fragmenting institutions, increased corruption, and criminality. Globalization poses a host of problems for education, training, and the constructive use of human talent. All this is particularly visible in Africa.

Africa is an extreme case in degree rather than kind. It illustrates many of the negative consequences globalization has for vulnerable people, with few public or private resources at their disposal and virtually no access to economic or political redress. The continent demonstrates how people can catch it both ways. On the one hand, Africans suffer from a declining share in the globalization process. This lack of participation leaves them further and further behind economically, poorer in both relative and real terms. The result is fewer political opportunities to address social needs with any likelihood of success. On the other hand, where globalization has occurred, poverty and social cleavages have been exacerbated (especially in such capital cities as Abidjan, Nairobi, or Lagos). The gap between rich and poor becomes more socially complex and politically serious. There are good grounds for asserting that however poor a country is, its rich will continue to get richer.

In short, globalization has negative effects both in its presence and absence. Similar dilemmas can be seen in parts of Latin America, the Middle East, the Philippines, Indonesia, and elsewhere, often accompanied by violence and terrorism. But in Africa the dysfunctions of globalization are particularly sour, coming as they do on top of the effects of postcolonialism, rapacious one-party regimes and military dictatorships, the erosion of educational and professional standards, government decay, and dilapidated institutions. Things are very bad, and proposals for debt reduction, institution building, and other rem-

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edies won't bring real improvement.

Marginalizations

Africa has undergone what can be called double marginalization. The continent has experienced an absolute decline in relation to the global economy. Within countries, there has been social polarization between a relatively concentrated sector of functional elites (most of them working for global firms or in government or educational institutions) and a growing sector of the population that is "superfluous." The result is a kind of social distortion. With the growth of the "superfluous" sector, governments face increasingly unmanageable overload problems.

The paradox is plain enough. The African economies need to be more securely integrated into global markets, primarily through private investment, yet it is this very integration that accentuates the problems globalization is supposed to solve. If that private investment is in high technology, it will employ relatively few workers, and so the new ventures will increase rather than decrease the "marginals" in countries with strikingly asymmetrical patterns of social inequalities. There are, in other words, unintended social inefficiencies of the market. Even with economic growth, they are likely to work at cross-purposes with political democracy. For although it may be possible for globalization to promote growth and democracy simultaneously, it is very difficult for it to do so in the face of expanding social inequities. This suggests an underlying logic:

- Growth depends on increasing productivity;
- Increased productivity depends on innovations that take form as capital-intensive industry at the expense of labor-intensive industry;
- This leads to redundancies in the labor-intensive sectors, especially among the unskilled and poorly educated. Their prolonged unemployment turns an economic condition (lack of a job) into a social condition of marginality;
- "Marginals," as a sector of "functionally superfluous" people, have few prospects for improvement. Life is risky for them, and their marginality individualizes risk because collective options for change seem nonexistent. Schools and training programs become useless, tending to validate failure rather than success. Something happens to people who have minimal access to facilities and resources for a sufficiently long time. Although they need the most, they receive the least and wind up as unwitting coconspirators in their own demise.
- The result is a type of social "pathology" demanding vast state expenditures on compensatory and welfare programs that themselves are invariably inefficient.
- Rising social overhead costs reduce the state's ability to balance equity and growth.

One unhappy, dangerous result is what can be called "cleavage politics," the social consequence of dividing societies into technologically literate and technologically disadvantaged populations. Among the disadvantaged, globalization's social and economic cleavages produce a politics that highlights differences of religion, caste, race, language, and other categorical affiliations. They promote conflict rather than mediation and lead people to stress "principles" rather than interests. All this reinforces the negative rather than the positive aspects of diversity and pluralism. The institutional framework required of a democratic political system is weakened, and political parties cannot function properly. It becomes very difficult to devise strategies to promote growth without exacerbating marginality or to induce innovative reforms without intensifying social polarization.

All this may be summarized in a contrarian hypothesis: market-driven economic growth in Africa will produce marginality, social disruption, and political turbulence, expanding opportunities for the few without a corresponding enlargement of opportunities for the many. These conditions will prejudice future democratic possibilities. In other words, drawing Africa deeper into the global economy will ensure that it will remain what it has become: a graveyard of failed projects and failed democracies.

Complexities

Africa's social problems are complex both in kind and in pedigree. Hopes were high at in-

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dependence that the new states would finally be able to transcend externally imposed economic, political, and social limitations. But the postcolonial situation was aggravated by social and political experiments that aimed to jumpstart economies. They were practically all failures, leaving behind problems that plagued succeeding generations of political leaders. The long-term legacy of colonialism was very mixed. It is patronizing to assume that postcolonial African leaders, whatever the pressures on them, were not their own agents. Despite an understandable reluctance to hold themselves accountable much of what went wrong, they were in fact not simple proxies or clients of outside powers. Many were complicit with those powers and thereby bolstered their own positions and feathered their own nests. Experience demonstrates that despite repeated calls for "transparency," globalization provides new opportunities for bad government.

BAD GOVERNMENT includes overvalued currencies, heavy indebtedness, inefficient investment, inadequate services, poorly performing state corporations, low labor productivity, urban unemployment, declining agricultural output, inadequate (costly and minimal) social services, weak administrative and health facilities, and drastically eroding educational standards. All these lead toward increasingly fragile infrastructures, corruption, technological backwardness, a dearth of skilled workers, and poor economic diversity. Take the case of Zimbabwe. Land reform there stalled, inflation is 40 percent, the university is closed, and the organized opposition has been brutally repressed. Corruption extends to the highest places.

Africa's share of the global social product declined radically in the 1970s and 1980s. Africa accounted for only 1.6 percent of international private capital flows by the first half of the 1990s. The total gross national product for sub-Saharan African countries is less than 10 percent of the GNP of the United States. Add broken-down road, rail, and communication facilities; heavy indebtedness; AIDS; and ethnic and religious conflicts, which range from civil unrest to genocidal violence; and it is hardly surprising that African civil societies don't function and political institutions are inadequate.

Worst of all, generations of children have been sacrificed—that is, maimed psychologically, physically, and educationally. Excepting South Africa, virtually all African countries are worse off today than at independence. If one finds hopeful signs it is mostly due to diminished expectations.

The Politics of Negative Pluralism

One way to consider the scope of Africa's tragedy is in terms of the "social pathologies" to which I have pointed. It is only at the extreme, where marginality becomes a permanent condition, that it becomes a social pathology. People have little faith that work will be appropriately rewarded. Cause and effect appear to them to be something random. Daily life is so precarious that individual survival becomes the sole object, and the means may easily include violence.

If such circumstances extend sufficiently, marginals become a "class," but not in a Marxist sense. They become a category made up of people forced out of the labor market and struggling for basic survival. These people create their own ways of life and subcultures that are very different from and threatening to the "functional" elites. The latter then seek physical boundaries to protect themselves. In most parts of Africa, the elites live in worlds that are physically and socially apart from the "marginals." The elites and their children have access to education, knowledge, and expertise together with funds; their physical space is ordered and sheltered.

The marginals tend to random violence, an individualized enterprise; but when risk does get collectivized and turned into social movements, it can lead to group violence ranging from terrorism to genocide (as we have seen in Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and the Sudan). Because economic marginality begets social marginality, people turn to other affiliations—religious, ethnic, linguistic, ideological—to protect themselves. The reinforcement of collective identities, a propensity to parochial rather than citizen commitments, can sunder societies, communities, and institutions. Hence globalization, a universalizing phenomenon, generates damaging

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particularisms and negative pluralism.

New forms of organization and power—with distinct types of membership, jurisdiction, and obligation—are one consequence of this untrusting world. Power becomes defined as an ability to sustain loyalty and punish betrayal. These are the preconditions for the organization of anti-state movements that encourage people to act in concert, to transcend individual limitations and engage in violent acts, to create both symbolic and moral capital (in the absence of other kinds). The tolerance and flexibility one associates with positive pluralism are absent.

In Africa, free-market efforts to remedy the economic distortions produced by government interventions and fiscal manipulations have resulted in growing polarization, cleavages, inequalities and conflict. Apart from Ghana, Senegal, Botswana, and a few other countries, democracy is mostly a façade. Few institutions—administrative, educational, health—are in practice what they pretend to be. Elites struggle not to be overwhelmed by those below. They build barriers to protect themselves, rely on guards, private networks, and personal clienteles (often based on ethnicity). Associates don't trust one another and live their lives under scrutiny. They are vulnerable to racketeers, and their children are permanent targets for kidnappers. The more powerful a political leader, the more shuttered, sheltered, and monitored his life. Political leaders become remote from reality (but they know how to plunder the treasury). Patronage and favoritism become means of access to them, rather than knowledge and capabilities. In short, power produces its own vulnerabilities. The higher someone rises in the hierarchy, the more he or she becomes an object of suspicion, jealousy, and anger. In such circumstances it is easy to justify pursuit of more money, power, and the use of secret police.

Because of these sorts of conditions, many of the most principled and best educated Africans leave to work abroad. Many of those who stay are underused, their abilities and knowledge wasted. Just when globalization demands innovative knowledge, Africa has fewer and fewer resources. In the meantime, those in the population who are superfluous to globalization and lack skills for capital-intensive industry often move into the cities. There they become large, miserable squatter populations.

Most people seem to accept these conditions. But not everyone does, and the result is an economic underworld of brigandage and violence. For those on the bottom, negative pluralism means that the world is a gambler's universe. In it, most people are losers. So a desire emerges to change the odds by changing the rules. It is one short step from parochial affiliations to local mafias that rely on clanship, clientalism, and identity politics. Boundaries are tense throughout today's Africa. Outsiders are feared, and this encourages xenophobia. With "identity" reconfigured as a power base, the path opens to ethnic civil wars and crime.

These conditions favor the rise of authoritarian, capricious political figures. By ignoring its own social consequences, globalization intensifies, directly and indirectly, conditions that turn people away from the idea of common citizenship. Negative pluralism overwhelms governments whose institutionalization is already weak. Leaders become unwilling or unable to deploy political power for useful purposes. When there is enormous economic scarcity on the bottom of the social pyramid, pluralism can undo democracy. Mutual hostilities among groups intensify, narrow interests are promoted, and competition among political parties becomes war by other means. Old political conflicts are reinvented in new contexts. Institutions that should bind society and help it to transcend narrow affiliations become sites of intense competition and rallying points for the mobilization of parochialism. Social and cultural cleavages are reinforced just where mediation of differences is most needed. The sort of civic obligation, discipline, and forbearance required of public and private life in a democracy can't be sustained.

The central premise of positive pluralism—which is essential to democracy—is free choice. In contrast, negative pluralism is based on group loyalty and the explicit limitation of choice. Or, to put it another way, positive pluralism defines the terms and conditions of freedom and choice. Negative pluralism, however, defines terms and conditions of identity and

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affiliation. In circumstances of marginality, identity becomes more important and there is less tolerance of others. When choice is limited to those who are functionally significant and identity defines the functionally superfluous, state and society will come into conflict. Negative pluralism downgrades commonalities among human beings and elevates differences, turns claims into rights, interests into principles, and maximizes cleavage politics. Difference becomes the priority and the basis for representation and accountability. The result is universal sectarianism and stalemate.

Implications

Today, most African countries are façade democracies. Most of them hold elections, even when one party dominates (often representing a dominant ethnic group), and others are prevented by various means from coming to power. Elections are not the sole gauge of democracy, but they are, of course, important, substantive milestones. As Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle point out in *Democratic Experiments in Africa*, the number of sub-Saharan countries holding competitive elections quadrupled between 1990 and 1995. The number of seats held by opposition parties rose from a paltry 10 percent in 1989 to a more robust 41 percent by 1994. Twenty-nine "founding elections" were held in thirty-eight countries between 1990 and 1994. That is, elections paved a route out of authoritarian regimes. "Not a single de jure one-party state remained in Africa" by 1994, write Bratton and van de Walle. "Governments instead adopted new constitutional rules that formally guaranteed basic political liberties, placed limits on tenure and power of chief political executives, and allowed multiple parties to exist and compete in elections. To all appearances, the African one-party state is not only politically bankrupt but, at least as a legal entity, extinct."

Unfortunately this has turned out to be more wishful thinking than fact. In the last few years African political leaders in some countries—for example, Cameroon, Gabon, and Kenya—have turned democratic institutions into a charade. In Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, the Central African Republic, Angola, and elsewhere, the state itself is a precarious institution. In Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Sudan, bandit warlordism saps the institutions of civil society, and torture, sexual abuse, and abduction of child soldiers remain common. There has been a decline in military coups at the center, but a rash of other forms of military upheaval.

Indeed, if my hypotheses about globalization and its consequences are true, even if democracy may be accepted in the long term and market principles embraced by some political leaders, these will be insufficient to ensure a steady growth of substantive democratic politics and civil societies. The problems posed by globalization must be attenuated. Platitudes, hortatory admonitions, and boilerplate solutions proffered by such international agencies as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund won't take Africans very far. It is fine to proclaim the need for restored self-confidence and mutual confidence, for greater transparency, and for institutional reform and human rights. But good intentions are likely to be eroded in the daily grubbing around of political and social survival.

Platitudes make it easier for protagonists and foes of globalization to confront each other in mutual incomprehension. Leaders in the industrial countries now talk about the environment, and the plight of the poor in "emerging" economies and exhibit sympathy for the effectively disenfranchised. But their chief concern is sustaining economic momentum. For them, globalization is the main road to social improvement. Their solution to the problems of globalization is more globalization. For some of globalizations's more radical opponents, however, class struggle is simply being resuscitated in modern dress. They see globalization as the same old capitalism with global appurtenances. Theirs is a lonely position, for they are left with a socialism that is all critique, rather than a socialism of solutions.

If placating gestures by leaders in industrial countries are largely just that—gestures—and if the zeal of their opponents is often accompanied by knee-jerk radicalism, then what can be done? It might be useful to establish civic responsibility as a criterion for dealing with governments—in the same way investors

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look to the management of a company in evaluating their options.

Most important, however, is to push everyone to refocus. Much greater attention must be paid to how people are affected locally by distant globalization policies. Greater complexity must be introduced into policy calculations by Western or global development institutions. Policy makers need to go and see for themselves the consequences of their decisions; they need to spend time living in the circumstances they help create. They need to recognize the value of knowledge in detail, of specifics. What may work in one setting can be a disaster in another.

Even though democracy in Africa is often a façade, politics has in fact become more populist. People have become more vocal. In the most remote areas, life dances more and more to its own tunes and pays its own pipers. Still, the African experience teaches us that there are many strategies for the use and abuse of power; it doesn't just work through familiar political channels, but it also works through countless ordinary strategies of life based on everything from blood ties to healing rituals, from the role of women to that of soothsayers. Territoriality and property disputes can be linked to ancestral rights. Self-constituted domains of meaning are, increasingly, also self-constituted domains of action. Boundaries, jurisdictions, and affiliations are the raw materials of power and conflict, not to speak of proscriptions.

So if globalization is not going to stop—and it won't—what is needed is far more attention paid to its vicissitudes. New theoretical and practical approaches are needed to deal with them. Communities, local and national, differ drastically. At a minimum, far greater care is needed in the preparation and organization of developmental projects, as well as a better sense of how to anticipate problems down the road. The whole concept of basic preparatory research needs to be enlarged, and the boundaries of what is regarded as relevant knowledge exponentially expanded. Most general theory rides roughshod over particularities of place and circumstance in ways that almost guarantee failure. Moreover, it becomes impossible to learn from mistakes. We need site-specific information in the social and cultural as well as the economic senses, rather than formulaic solutions.

If the African experience demonstrates in extreme form some of the problems of globalization, it also highlights the fact that solutions are yet to be found. They won't be until it is recognized that global knowledge requires local knowledge; and local knowledge requires adapting both market models and policies to situation, circumstance, and place. I am suggesting that globalization compels a second information revolution. The first was technological in every sense of the term. Now we must tell those who are remaking the world just what they are really doing. ●

DAVID E. APTER's most recent books are *The Legitimization of Violence* and *Revolutionary Discourse in Mao's Republic* (with Tony Saich).

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1. The World Bank's *World Development Report* for 1997 speaks convincingly of the need to reinvigorate "the state's capacity" and calls for an activist rather than a minimalist state. But how to accomplish this remains something of a mystery. See *The State in a Changing World* (Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 27.

2. Not so long ago many things said today of Africa were said about China, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

3. Nigeria provides one example. North-South relations remain tense. Despite a nominally democratic regime, the country remains hostage to northern military officers. Corruption remains rampant with the concentration of wealth in the Abuja area largely a rake-off from oil revenues extracted from the south. Meanwhile, Makoko, a Lagos slum, is pitched on a swamp. Most people who manage somehow to survive do so with few of life's basic necessities. It might as well be on the other end of the earth. No wonder that the Yoruba and Ibo peoples in the south of the country began talk of secession. *New York Times* (July 20, 1998).

4. See Andrew Apter, *Black Critics and Kings: The Hermeneutics of Power in Yoruba Society* (University of Chicago Press, 1992).

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Can There Be a Decent Left?

Michael Walzer

LEFTIST OPPOSITION to the war in Afghanistan faded in November and December of last year, not only because of the success of the war but also because of the enthusiasm with which so many Afghans greeted that success. The pictures of women showing their smiling faces to the world, of men shaving their beards, of girls in school, of boys playing soccer: all this was no doubt a slap in the face to leftist theories of American imperialism, but also politically disarming. There was (and is) still a lot to worry about: refugees, hunger, minimal law and order. But it was suddenly clear, even to many opponents of the war, that the Taliban regime had been the biggest obstacle to any serious effort to address the looming humanitarian crisis, and it was the American war that removed the obstacle. It looked (almost) like a war of liberation, a humanitarian intervention.

But the war was primarily neither of these things; it was a preventive war, designed to make it impossible to train terrorists in Afghanistan and to plan and organize attacks like that of September 11. And that war was never really accepted, in wide sections of the left, as either just or necessary. Recall the standard arguments against it: that we should have turned to the United Nations; that we had to prove the guilt of al-Qaeda and the Taliban and then organize international trials; and that the war, if it was fought at all, had to be fought without endangering civilians. The last point was intended to make fighting impossible. I haven't come across any arguments that seriously tried to describe how this (or any) war could be fought without putting civilians at risk, or to ask what degree of risk might be permissible, or to specify the risks that American soldiers should accept in order to reduce the risk of civilian deaths. All these were legitimate issues in Afghanistan, as they were in the Kosovo and Gulf wars. But among last fall's antiwar demonstrators, "Stop the bombing" wasn't a slogan that summarized a coherent view of the bombing—or of the alternatives to it. The truth is that most leftists were not committed to having a coherent view about things like that; they were committed to opposing the war, and they were prepared to oppose it without regard to its causes or character and without any visible concern about preventing future terrorist attacks.

A few left academics have tried to figure out how many civilians actually died in Afghanistan, aiming at as high a figure as possible, on the assumption, apparently, that if the number is greater than the number of people killed in the attacks on the Twin Towers, the war is unjust. At the moment, most of the numbers are propaganda; there is no reliable accounting. But the claim that the numbers matter in just this way—that the 3,120th death determines the injustice of the war—is wrong. It denies one of the most basic and best understood moral distinctions: between premeditated murder and unintended killing. And the denial isn't accidental, as if the people making it just forgot about, or didn't know about, the everyday moral world. The denial is willful: unintended killing by Americans in Afghanistan counts as murder. This can't be true anywhere else, for anybody else.

The radical failure of the left's response to the events of last fall raises a disturbing question: can there be a decent left in a superpower? Or more accurately, in the only superpower? Maybe the guilt produced by living in such a country and enjoying its privileges makes it impossible to sustain a decent (intelligent, responsible, morally nuanced) politics. Maybe festering resentment, ingrown anger,

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and self-hate are the inevitable result of the long years spent in fruitless opposition to the global reach of American power. Certainly, all those emotions were plain to see in the left's reaction to September 11, in the failure to register the horror of the attack or to acknowledge the human pain it caused, in the *schadenfreude* of so many of the first responses, the barely concealed glee that the imperial state had finally gotten what it deserved. Many people on the left recovered their moral balance in the weeks that followed; there is at least the beginning of what should be a long process of self-examination. But many more have still not brought themselves to think about what really happened.

Is there any way of escaping the politics of guilt and resentment on the home ground of a superpower? We might begin to worry about this question by looking at oppositional politics in older imperial states. I can't do that in any sustained way (historians take note), only very sketchily. The Boer War is a good place to begin, because of the fierce opposition it aroused in England—which wasn't marked, despite the cruelty of the war, by the kind of self-hate that we have seen on the American left. Nor were the "little Englanders" hostile to English politics and culture; they managed to take a stand against the empire without alienating themselves from its home country. Indeed, they were more likely to regard England as the home country of liberalism and parliamentary democracy. After all, the values of parliamentarianism (self-government, free speech, the right of opposition) did not support imperial rule. George Orwell's defense of patriotism seems to me an actual description of the feelings of many English liberals and leftists before his time and after (even of the Marxists, some of the best of whom were historians, like E. P. Thompson, who wrote sympathetically, indeed romantically, about the English people). Later on, during Margaret Thatcher's terms, and particularly during the Falklands War, the tone of the opposition was more bitter, but by then there was no empire, only sour memories.

I think that the French story is similar. For most of the imperial years, French leftists were as proud of their Frenchness as were people on the right—and perhaps with more justification. For wasn't France the birthplace of enlightenment, universal values, and human rights? The Algerian war gave rise to a more familiar self-hatred, most clearly manifest in Jean-Paul Sartre's defense of National Liberation Front (FLN) terrorism (in his preface to Franz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*): "To shoot down a European is to kill two birds with one stone, to destroy an oppressor and the man he oppresses at the same time: there remains a dead man and a free man." This suggests that it is actually a good thing to kill Europeans (they were mostly French), but Sartre did not volunteer to go himself and be killed so that one more Algerian would be a free man. His was a generalized, not a personal, self-hatred.

WHY SHOULDN'T the American story be like these two, with long years of healthy oppositionist politics, and only episodic resentment? Wasn't America a beacon of light to the Old World, a city on a hill, an unprecedented experiment in democratic politics? I grew up with the Americanism of the popular front in the 1930s and 1940s; I look back on it now and think that the Communist Party's effort to create a leftist pop culture, in an instant, as the party line turned, was kitschy and manipulative—and also politically very smart. Paul Robeson's "Ballad for Americans," whatever the quality of the music, provides at least a sense of what an unalienated American radicalism might be like. The days after September 11 would not have been a bad time for a popular front. What had happened that made something like that unthinkable?

The cold war, imperial adventures in Central America, Vietnam above all, and then the experience of globalization under American leadership: all these, for good reasons and bad, produced a pervasive leftist view of the United States as global bully—rich, privileged, selfish, hedonistic, and corrupt beyond remedy. The sense of a civilizing mission, which must have sustained parts of the British and French left in a more fully imperial setting (read John Stuart Mill on British India), never got off the ground here. Foreign aid, the Peace Corps, and nation building never took on the dimensions

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of a "mission"; they were mostly sidelines of U.S. foreign policy: underfunded, frequently in the shade of military operations. Certainly, there has been much to criticize in the policies of every U.S. government since the Second World War (see almost any back issue of *Dissent*). And yet, the leftist critique—most clearly, I think, from the Vietnam years forward (from the time of "Amerika," Viet Cong flags, and breathless trips to North Vietnam)—has been stupid, overwrought, grossly inaccurate. It is the product of what Philip Roth, in his novel *I Married a Communist*, aptly described as "the combination of embitterment and not thinking." The left has lost its bearings. Why?

I WILL SUGGEST four reasons, without claiming that this is an exhaustive list. It is nothing more than a rough argument, an attempt to begin a debate.

(1) **Ideology:** the lingering effects of the Marxist theory of imperialism and of the third worldist doctrines of the 1960s and 1970s. We may think that we live in a postideological age, and maybe most of us do, but the traces of old ideologies can be found everywhere in the discourse of the left. Perhaps the most striking consequence is the inability of leftists to recognize or acknowledge the power of religion in the modern world. Whenever writers on the left say that the "root cause" of terror is global inequality or human poverty, the assertion is in fact a denial that religious motives really count. Theology, on this view, is just the temporary, colloquial idiom in which the legitimate rage of oppressed men and women is expressed.

A few brave leftists described the Taliban regime and the al-Qaeda movement as examples of "clerical fascism," which at least gets the adjective right. And maybe "fascist" is close enough, even if this new politics doesn't look like the product of late capitalist degeneration. It gives the left a reason for opposing Islamic terror, which is an important achievement. But it would be better to find a reason in the realities of terrorism itself, in the idea of a holy war against the infidels, which is not the same thing as a war against inferior races or alien nations. In fact, Islamic radicalism is not, as fascism is, a racist or ultranationalist doctrine. Something else is going on, which we need to understand.

But ideologically primed leftists were likely to think that they already understood whatever needed to be understood. Any group that attacks the imperial power must be a representative of the oppressed, and its agenda must be the agenda of the left. It isn't necessary to listen to its spokesmen. What else can they want except . . . the redistribution of resources across the globe, the withdrawal of American soldiers from wherever they are, the closing down of aid programs for repressive governments, the end of the blockade of Iraq, and the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel? I don't doubt that there is some overlap between this program and the dreams of al-Qaeda leaders—though al-Qaeda is not an egalitarian movement, and the idea that it supports a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is crazy. The overlap is circumstantial and convenient, nothing more. A holy war against infidels is not, even unintentionally, unconsciously, or "objectively," a left politics. But how many leftists can even imagine a holy war against infidels?

(2) **Powerlessness and alienation:** leftists have no power in the United States, and most of us don't expect to exercise power, ever. Many left intellectuals live in America like internal aliens, refusing to identify with their fellow citizens, regarding any hint of patriotic feeling as a surrender to jingoism. That's why they had such difficulty responding emotionally to the attacks of September 11 or joining in the expressions of solidarity that followed. Equally important, that's why their participation in the policy debate after the attacks was so odd; their proposals (turn to the UN, collect evidence against bin Laden, and so on) seem to have been developed with no concern for effectiveness and no sense of urgency. They talked and wrote as if they could not imagine themselves responsible for the lives of their fellow citizens. That was someone else's business; the business of the left was . . . what? To oppose the authorities, whatever they did. The good result of this opposition was a spirited defense of civil liberties. But even this defense displayed a certain willful irresponsibility and ineffectiveness, because so many leftists rushed to the defense

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of civil liberties while refusing to acknowledge that the country faced real dangers—as if there were no need at all to balance security and freedom. Maybe the right balance will emerge spontaneously from the clash of right-wing authoritarianism and left-wing absolutism, but it would be better practice for the left to figure out the right balance for itself, on its own; the effort would suggest a responsible politics and a real desire to exercise power, some day.

But what really marks the left, or a large part of it, is the bitterness that comes with abandoning any such desire. The alienation is radical. How else can one understand the unwillingness of people who, after all, live here, and whose children and grandchildren live here, to join in a serious debate about how to protect the country against future terrorist attacks? There is a pathology in this unwillingness, and it has already done us great damage.

(3) **The moral purism of blaming America first:** many leftists seem to believe that this is like blaming oneself, taking responsibility for the crimes of the imperial state. In fact, when we blame America, we also lift ourselves above the blameworthy (other) Americans. The left sets itself apart. Whatever America is doing in the world *isn't* our doing. In some sense, of course, that is true. The defeat of fascism in the middle years of the twentieth century and of communism in the last years were not our doing. Some of us, at least, thought that these efforts merited our support—or our "critical support." But this is a complicated and difficult politics, and it doesn't allow for the favorite posture of many American leftists: standing as a righteous minority, brave and determined, among the timid, the corrupt, and the wicked. A posture like that ensures at once the moral superiority of the left and its political failure.

(4) **The sense of not being entitled to criticize anyone else:** how can we live in the United States, the richest, most powerful, and most privileged country in the world—and say anything critical about people who are poorer and weaker than we are? This was a major issue in the 1960s, when the New Left seemed to have discovered "oppression" for the first time, and we all enlisted on the side of oppressed men and women and failed, again and again, to criticize the authoritarianism and brutality that often scar their politics. There is no deeper impulse in left politics than this enlistment; solidarity with people in trouble seems to me the most profound commitment that leftists make. But this solidarity includes, or should include, a readiness to tell these people when we think they are acting wrongly, violating the values we share. Even the oppressed have obligations, and surely the first among these is not to murder innocent people, not to make terrorism their politics. Leftists who cannot insist upon this point, even to people poorer and weaker than they are, have abandoned both politics and morality for something else. They are radical only in their abjection. That was Sartre's radicalism, face-to-face with FLN terror, and it has been imitated by thousands since, excusing and apologizing for acts that any decent left would begin by condemning.

WHAT OUGHT to be done? I have a modest agenda: *put decency first*, and then we will see. So, let's go back over my list of reasons for the current indecency.

Ideology: We certainly need something better than the rag-tag Marxism with which so much of the left operates today—a Marxism whose chief effect is to turn world politics into a cheap melodrama, with all the villains dressed to look the part and one villain larger than life. A tough materialist analysis would be fine, so long as it is sophisticated enough to acknowledge that material interests don't exhaust the possibilities of human motivation. The spectacle of European leftists straining to find some economic reason for the Kosovo War (oil in the Balkans? a possible pipeline? was NATO reaching for control of the Black Sea?) was entertaining at the time, but it doesn't bear repeating. For the moment we can make do with a little humility, an openness to heterodox ideas, a sharp eye for the real world, and a readiness to attend to moral as well as materialist arguments. This last point is especially important. The encounter with Islamic radicalism, and with other versions of politicized religion, should help us understand that high among our interests are our values: secular

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enlightenment, human rights, and democratic government. Left politics starts with the defense of these three.

Alienation and powerlessness: It is a common idea on the left that political responsibility is something like temperance, moderation, and cleanliness—good bourgeois values that are incompatible with radical politics or incisive social criticism. You have to be a little wild to be a radical. That isn't a crazy idea, and alienated intellectuals may well have, more than anyone else, the anger necessary to begin the critical project and the lust for intellectual combat that sustains it. But they don't necessarily get things right, and the angrier they are and the more they are locked into their combative posture, the more likely they are to get things wrong. What was necessary after September 11, and what is necessary now, is an engagement with our fellow citizens that recognizes the fellowship. We can be as critical as we like, but these are people whose fate we share; we are responsible for their safety as they are for ours, and our politics has to reflect that mutual responsibility. When they are attacked, so are we; and we should join willingly and constructively in debates about how to defend the country. Once again: we should act as if we won't always be powerless.

Blaming America first: Not everything that goes badly in the world goes badly because of us. The United States is not omnipotent, and its leaders should not be taken as co-conspirators in every human disaster. The left has little difficulty understanding the need for distributive justice with regard to resources, but we have been practically clueless about the just distribution of praise and blame. To take the obvious example: in the second half of the twentieth century, the United States fought both just and unjust wars, undertook both just and unjust interventions. It would be a useful exercise to work through the lists and test our capacity to make distinctions—to recognize, say, that the United States was wrong in Guatemala in 1954 and right in Kosovo in 1999. Why can't we accept an ambivalent relation to American power, acknowledging that it has had good and bad effects in the world? But shouldn't an internationalist left demand a more egalitarian distribution of power? Well, yes, in principle; but any actual redistribution will have to be judged by the quality of the states that would be empowered by it. Faced with states like, say, Saddam Hussein's Iraq, I don't think we have to support a global redistribution of political power.

Not blaming anyone else: The world (and this includes the third world) is too full of hatred, cruelty, and corruption for any left, even the American left, to suspend its judgment about what's going on. It's not the case that because we are privileged we should turn inward and focus our criticism only on ourselves. In fact, inwardness is one of our privileges; it is often a form of political self-indulgence. Yes, we are entitled to blame the others whenever they are blameworthy; in fact, it is only when we do that, when we denounce, say, the authoritarianism of third world governments, that we will find our true comrades—the local opponents of the maximal leaders and military juntas, who are often waiting for our recognition and support. If we value democracy, we have to be prepared to defend it, at home, of course, but not only there.

I would once have said that we were well along: the American left has an honorable history, and we have certainly gotten some things right, above all, our opposition to domestic and global inequalities. But what the aftermath of September 11 suggests is that we have not advanced very far—and not always in the right direction. The left needs to begin again. ●

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Empire and Myopia

Todd Gitlin

THERE ARE SOME who think that because the United States has global interests and a heart of gold, it is entitled to act just as it pleases, economically and militarily, anywhere it pleases—not a bad first approximation to the classical meaning of empire. And there are others who, as soon as they deploy the word "empire" with a curl of the lip, think they have settled the case against the United States whatever it does—for the United States is, after all, the closest thing to an imperial force in the world today.

Truth be told, there is on occasion something to be said for empires—not their cruelty, their violence, or their exploitation of subject peoples, but the law, citizenship, and stability that historically they can bring. Mainly, of course, the recommendation comes from those in the metropolitan core who fatten on the advantages of empire and suffer few of the costs. But at times there is more. As the historian Anthony Pagden writes in his excellent primer *Peoples and Empire*, "because of their size and sheer diversity, most empires have in time become universal, cosmopolitan societies. In order to rule vast and widely separated domains, imperial governments have generally found themselves compelled to be broadly tolerant of diversity of culture and sometimes even of belief, so long as these posed no threat to their authority." To be sure, threats to their authority have frequently been met by ruthless, disproportionate violence. But dependents also submit to imperial power because they enjoy its benefits.

One benefit that had better be faced head-on is that empire is sometimes better than the alternative, if the alternative is a local autocracy, or al-Qaeda, or a rival empire like Nazi Germany or Imperial Japan. It can be better not only for the metropole of power, but also for the periphery. The extension of American power in 1945 was excellent for Germans and West Europeans in general. It bears remembering that the Islamist terrorists who demolished the twin cathedrals of the World Trade Center have no claim whatsoever to anti-imperialist credentials. Insofar as there is any political program attached to their version of jihad against "infidels" and "hypocrites"—their term for Muslim leaders who disagree with them—they cherish the caliphate of yore that was defeated by the West, and would resurrect it if they could, with no qualms about inflicting disaster not only upon America but upon the poor countries of the world whose misery they worsened with the attacks of September 11.

Leaving aside al-Qaeda, is the problem that America has too much power? Or that America, with its military supremacy, its immense wealth, its governmental and corporate command over resources, suffers from too little intelligence for all that power? The answer is both, because empire tends to make the winners complacent and stupid—perhaps even more so when Americans pretend to be disinterested in the uses of power. Much about the American version of empire is ignorant, cheap, and myopic. It is ignorant because, harboring the fantasy that the United States represents only values and not power, it is unwilling to face the responsibilities of power—the debt that rulers owe the ruled—which include the pursuit of just ends and the persuasion of dependents that they are getting something valuable in exchange for their dependency. Sometimes, empire can exercise power to achieve justice at a distance. If you believe that the United States should exert leverage on Israel to adhere to United Nations resolutions and abandon the Occupation, if you believe that

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the United States should impose a reasonable two-state solution and help guarantee it, whatever the worst inclinations of Palestinians and Israelis alike, you are not against American power—you are for a particular use of American power, a just and wise one.

In the prevailing American version of empire, ignorance goes with belligerence. Even after September 11, the United States goes on in taking pride in its imperviousness to foreign criticism. It wants to lord it over much of the world on the cheap, riding a wave of military superiority. It is unwilling to pay to reduce the unprecedented inequality in the world, spending as we do a mere 0.1 percent of our gross domestic product on development aid. (The UN has recommended 0.7 percent.) This is myopic not because al-Qaeda is anti-imperialist but because development combined with better intelligence and policing is likely to reduce the number of American-hating terrorists in the world and the damage they can do.

Toward this end, American self-protection cannot afford to look like unbridled domination. The world is too complex and intricately bound together to permit for long the harsh use of any super-sovereign power. American power needs legitimacy, which depends upon sharing power with allies, which in turn depends on being willing to listen. (In the 1960s, unwillingness to listen—in particular to warnings from Charles de Gaulle, who knew something about the limits of Western hegemony in Southeast Asia—cost us dearly.) If the United States forgoes the legitimacy of its power, it weakens its promise of producing stability. It cannot forever shoot down all the "evildoers." As the historian Paul Kennedy points out, sooner or later American economic advantages are likely to erode, and then where are we? Defending "our way of life" in a manner no other nation is willing to accept?

EMPIRES FADE. Hubris is their custom. Inevitably, they grow smug, bite off too much, inspire too much resentment, collide with too many enemies too strategically placed. In an age of weapons of mass destruction, the collisions are more dangerous than ever before. The risk of unprecedented massacre looms. So the trick is to use power for justice as much as possible, then (like the British Empire in its sunset, leaving aside crucial mistakes like the allocation of Kashmir to India) arrange to fade wisely, yield power fairly gracefully—not to the perpetrators of mass murder, but to alliances and multinational institutions better, more legitimately, able to wield it.

Over the coming decades, empire is very unlikely to disappear, but more legitimate distributions of power are possible. Imperial politics could be more inclusive, less brutal, with more fairly enforced law and less blatant invasion of other nations' sovereignty. Toward that end, there is no more legitimate global force than the United Nations. We need more, not less, UN power; we need, for example, well-funded UN support to police the post-Taliban order in Afghanistan—and this is impossible without a strong American contribution. We need to seek, and require, Security Council sanction for any further military action (as during the Gulf War and after September 11). The world is going to need UN, NATO, and other interventions and, in effect, protectorates, as in Cambodia, East Timor, Bosnia, and Kosovo. Eventually, the UN will need some sort of police force in readiness—not a full-fledged army, but a constabulary capable of enforcing resolutions of the Security Council.

Yet George W. Bush's administration is moving in precisely the wrong direction. Having achieved legitimacy after September 11 by invoking the principle of self-defense, one that no nation willingly forgoes, the United States now threatens to cast legitimacy overboard as a luxury it cannot afford. The stabilities that accrue to empire at its best are now jeopardized by empire in a state of advanced overreach. The White House of George W. Bush wishes to enlarge a just, coalitional war of self-defense to a generalized and unilateral war against an "axis of evil," a war to be undertaken at times and places of its own choosing, and with little or no regard for international law. To the amazement of our allies in Europe, Japan, South Korea, and elsewhere (not least an elected reform government of Iran), Bush declares that Iran, Iraq, and North Korea are now in his sights. The dangers of an omniflexible "war on terrorism," obscured by the success-

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ful prosecution of the Afghanistan War, now emerge full-blown, for what kind of a war is this without a war aim, an end-point, a definition of victory? It is a perennial one: war whenever we get around to it. In Europe, whose concerns are shrugged off in Washington, even the European Union commissioner for international relations, the Conservative Chris Patten, has expressed alarm.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES of Bush's presidency are not irrelevant to his penchant for unilateralism. George II's career is nothing if not a protracted exercise in getting away with overreach. The life-lesson he's learned is that you can drink yourself into one stupor after another for decades; cover up various holes in your résumé; lose piles of other people's money in bad investments; and still hustle up more of other people's money for bigger investments, including a baseball team, which you use as a launch to the governorship of a large state; then raise piles more money to run for president; and—as long as you started with the right parents—you can come out on top. Then, you and your entourage, including your brother, his staff, and a Supreme Court chosen during your party's long stays in power, stop the Florida recount—and what do you know, you're in power, unelected. You could easily feel anointed, born to rule. A career that culminates in a bloodless coup d'état gives a man a sense that he can get away with an awful lot. Whatever doesn't destroy him makes him stronger.

September 11, 2001, is his latest rationale for unilateral action, but the Bush administration was already heading this way—with its unilateral opposition to the Kyoto Treaty, the International Criminal Court, biological weapons inspection, and the antiballistic missile treaty. Having learned that brute power pays off, Bush merrily proceeds with his modus operandi and moves toward a permanent brute-force footing. Fearing backlash, Democrats and independents have been slow to tangle with him. Television is predictably supine. Allies are brushed aside. The public goes back to business.

THE FAILURE OF intelligence that afflicted the United States before September 11 has more than one dimension. Oil dependency also ranks high on the list of gross, unexamined irresponsibilities. For half a century, purported realists in Washington have thought nothing of greasing the palms of Middle Eastern tribal leaders so that they will grant us (and the Japanese and Europeans to an even greater degree) the favor of buying their oil. Oil makes America grovel to Saudi tyrants, who funded the Taliban in Afghanistan and Wahhabi madrassas throughout the world. Earlier, oil lubricated our disastrous support for the brutal shah of Iran—another gift to Islamic fundamentalism, as it turned out. Oil floated, and continues to float, the terror regime of Saddam Hussein. Access to Saudi and Gulf oil looks like a triumph of empire but could easily be its undoing. Now the United States is tying itself to Central Asian dictatorships for the sake of new oil sources, and underwriting counter-guerrilla military action in Colombia to protect an oil pipeline. Some realism.

It is not surprising that an administration so heavily beholden to oil companies thinks that such policies will secure American wealth and power in the twenty-first century. What is genuinely shocking is the dead silence that greets this absurdity, as if our politics should remain innocent of any substantial debate about the stakes and costs of American power; as if everyone who objects and worries is no more than an ignorant whiner. Here is the pathos of empire—that, even in the face of murderous attacks, it should retain its innocence to the end. ●

TODD GITLIN is the author most recently of *Media Unlimited: How the Torrent of Images and Sounds Overwhelms Our Lives.*

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Toward a Global Rule of Law

Daniele Archibugi and Iris Young

THE ATTACKS on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in September 2001 can appear within two different frames of interpretation. The first sees them as attacks on the United States as a state and its people. The second views them as crimes against humanity. The difference in interpretation is not technical, but political, and each implies different strategies of reaction. Although some public figures recommended the second interpretation shortly after the attack, we know that the first has prevailed. Here we question the statist response to the terrorist attacks and offer some vision of how the United States and other global actors might conceive their possibilities for action under a more cosmopolitan interpretation of the situation.

The Statist Interpretation

The Bush administration framed the attacks as an act of war against the United States, for which military retaliation is the appropriate response. This frame meant finding a state or states to engage in war, and the United States chose Afghanistan on the grounds that the Taliban government harbored and supported al-Qaeda. The United States has singled out Iran, Iraq, and North Korea as additional states toward which military action may be taken. The construction of a response to the attacks as a state-to-state military conflict, however, has never fit well. Even within a traditional state-centered world politics, the fact that the government of Afghanistan allowed al-Qaeda leaders to run camps in its territory is a shaky justification for making war on the state and eliminating its government. Aware of that shakiness, the United States shifted its reasons for the war against the Taliban from a rationale of self-defense to a humanitarian defense of freeing the Afghan people, especially its women, from oppression. We find this rationale cynical and opportunistic, since neither the Bush nor the Clinton administration publicly worried before about the plight of the Afghan people.

Responding to the terrorist attacks in the frame of the states system, thus making a war against a state, does not fit the case, nor has it been effective in making a safer world. Although the war may have destroyed some al-Qaeda bases and the United States has captured some members of that group, as yet the world has no reason to think of them as specifically connected to the nineteen suicidal attackers of September 11. Widely circulating estimates of civilian deaths in Afghanistan give a minimum of 1,000 and as many as 3,700, and hundreds are likely to die from unexploded bombs. The numbers of refugees suffering hunger and frost because of the war is impossible to calculate. There is no reason to think that the war has deterred other would-be terrorists around the world. The war may have contributed to destabilizing central Asia with consequences yet to be seen.

Although the United States has not acted alone in prosecuting the war, it has called the shots. The United States decided with whom to cooperate and assigns roles to other actors. It is difficult not to interpret U.S. policy in recent months as an effort to consolidate even more firmly its position as sovereign of the world. In the last decade, the United States has used its military force in the Persian Gulf, Somalia, Panama, the Balkans, and many other places. In every case, the U.S. interventions have had victims, but few have been Americans. The magnitude of U.S. military and economic power and the willingness of the United States to wield it asymmetrically and with only the thinnest veneer of multilateralism elicits hostile reactions all over the world, even from

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people thought to be allies. A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center and the *International Herald Tribune* in December 2001 found that most of the non-Americans among the 275 political and business leaders polled believe that the United States wrongly uses its power and that some of its policies are responsible for growing global disparities in well being. In response to such hegemony, it seems to us imperative that leaders and citizens all over the world should envision a global rule of law and should try to shame and pressure the United States to act more in conformity with such a vision.

An Alternative Vision

Aspirations to a global society governed by fair rules should be counted among the casualties of September 11. The fall of the Berlin Wall brought hope of constituting a world order founded on international legality and with strengthened institutions of international cooperation. Recent debates and demonstrations about the policies and procedures of international trade and financial organizations have assumed the emergence of more global-level governance. The question has been whether global regulatory regimes will represent solely the interests of the world's most powerful actors or can include the voices and interests of the global majority in transparent and accountable institutions.

We base a vision of an alternative response to terrorism on these aspirations for just and democratic global governance. Hitherto, discussions of an international rule of law and global regulatory systems have paid less attention to the prevention and investigation of crimes and their prosecution in an international system than to such matters as international trade, investment, or environmental protection. We propose two premises for reasoning about what an alternative response to the terrorist attacks of September might have been and still can be. First, the situation should be conceptualized in people-to-people, rather than state-to-state, terms. The attackers were not representatives of a state, but members of private organizations, and those whom they killed were, for the most part, private individuals from at least seventy different countries. Second, the events should be conceptualized as crimes, not acts of war, to which the proper response is criminal investigation and prosecution within a rule of law and legally mandated measures of preventing and deterring more such crimes.

Democratic states usually do not, and ought never, respond arbitrarily and with military power to terrorist attacks committed inside their borders. Spain in response to threats from the Basque separatist group ETA, Italy in dealing with the Red Brigades, the United States in response to the bombing in Oklahoma City—all mobilized the instruments of law and police power. Stepping out of legal bounds, as did the Spanish government for a while when it authorized some state agents to use extrajudicial methods to combat terrorism, seems to have the effect of increasing the risk of attack.

The world ought to respond to international terrorist organizations according to the same principles of the rule of law that these governments use in responding to domestic terrorist organizations. Responding to acts and threats of terrorism and to transnational terrorist networks under a global rule of law need not imply being "softer" on terrorists than using a state-to-state response led by a hegemonic state. On the contrary, a genuinely global cooperative law enforcement response would be more effective in identifying and apprehending culprits, as well as preventing future attacks, while at the same time harming fewer people and destroying fewer goods, than has the war against Afghanistan.

Ultimately, the creation of a more peaceful and just world implies basic changes in political, economic, and social institutions. We have to start somewhere, so we offer five principles that could guide international policy in meaningful responses to threats and problems while furthering such transformative aims.

(1) Legitimize and Strengthen International Institutions

Actions and policies that treat terrorism and threats of terrorism as involving all the world's peoples within a rule of law should utilize international organizations and legal instru-

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ments. The United Nations is most important here. Although there are many flaws in its design and operations that should be changed, the UN is the only transnational institution with representation from nearly all the world's peoples. Institutions, policies, and conventions of the UN, moreover, cover many of the most urgent world problems.

Currently the UN is in an impossible position. On the one hand, it is called on the scene to restore peace, build governments and infrastructure, aid refugees, conduct health campaigns, and pursue many other activities, in dozens of regions of the world simultaneously. On the other hand, member states routinely deny the UN the means for carrying out such missions, not only by failing to provide funds, but also by limiting its authority. When the UN's efforts prove inadequate to solve problems, as often happens, world leaders regularly heap abuse on the organization for being unresponsive and inept. The United States and other world powers cannot continue to dump the consequences of their wars and economic decisions on the United Nations while at the same time encouraging people to disdain the organization.

The present organization of the UN Security Council, with its five permanent members reflecting global politics in 1945, needs serious reform. That Security Council, however, passed two resolutions after the attacks of September 11—Resolution 1368 (September 12) and Resolution 1373 (September 28)—that call for transnational cooperation among all member states to deter and investigate terrorist and other transnational criminal activity. If government leaders allied themselves with social movements, the United States could be pressed to enter more genuinely multilateral efforts to combat transnational criminal networks, efforts that would give more decision-making participation to the less developed world.

(2) Coordinate Law Enforcement and Intelligence Gathering Institutions across the World

The U. S. Congress apparently has little interest in investigating how two of the most sophisticated investigative and intelligence organizations in the world, the Central Intelligence Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, could have been caught so off guard by a crime of such huge proportions. One explanation is the state-centeredness of both agencies, along with the investigative and intelligence gathering agencies of most states. Simultaneous with increased transnational organization and movement of capital, labor, technology, and culture is the transnational organization and movement of crime. Intelligence and law enforcement institutions, however, lag behind this reality. Intelligence continues to be principally an instrument of a state against other states; in a spy culture the agencies of one state engage in secret activities in relation to other states, explicitly not trusting one another. Domestic law enforcement agencies, furthermore, each have their own systems that make communication and cooperation across borders difficult. The September attacks should serve as a wake-up call for reversing these structures of intelligence and law enforcement, to enable greater cooperation among agencies to protect *citizens* of the world, not states.

THERE ARE some international instruments on which to build for such a purpose. INTERPOL, the international police organization with 179 member nations, has worked for decades against terrorism, drug trafficking, money laundering, white-collar crime, computer crime, counterfeiting, organized crime, and traffic in women and children. Even though its budget is minuscule compared to the task, it maintains extensive databases of known and suspected terrorists and criminals. It organizes data on counterfeit passports and stolen credit card accounts that can be useful to law enforcement agents in nearly any country. Yet state-based intelligence agencies infrequently work with the organization to gain access to its data for their work

At its millennium meeting in November 2000, the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, which 140 countries, including the United States, have already signed. This convention requires states to strengthen domestic laws aimed at controlling organized crime and

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encourages states to enhance systems of transnational cooperation in legal expertise, extradition, and criminal investigation. It specifically calls for providing technical assistance to less developed countries to upgrade their capacities for dealing with organized crime. Although at the moment this convention may be little more than a piece of paper, like some other UN negotiated treaties and conventions, it can be used by political leaders and social movements to demand institutions and resources that put its principles into action.

The United States, along with many other states, can act to advance international cooperation in law enforcement, both domestic and transnational, as well as to create and strengthen global law enforcement agencies. Doing so implies breaking down the statist distinction between domestically oriented police and internationally oriented spy agencies. Current policy in the United States and in many Western countries blurs this distinction in just the wrong direction. By allowing the CIA and FBI to cooperate inside the United States, the government fosters a more repressive internal state at the same time that it becomes more defensive and suspicious externally. Increased transnational law enforcement cooperation should come with procedures of accountability and transparency in order to protect the rights of individuals.

(3) Increase Finance Regulation

One of the most efficient ways to strike at terrorist networks, and organized crime more generally, is to hit their money. It is surprising that though Osama bin Laden has been known to head and fund terrorist operations for years, al-Qaeda has had the liberty to move the necessary capital. Why has no one until now succeeded in attacking the finances? The answer lies partly in the fact that world business leaders resist financial regulation. Corporations regularly move their money around the world, for example, in order to avoid paying taxes.

Tracking and regulating the movement of funds can dry up the flow that supports criminal activities. A war on the free flow of money does not produce "collateral damage," create refugees, or pollute the air. The United States has indeed enhanced its capacity to investigate and regulate money flows. In this area it is obvious that even the most awesome military power of the world must depend on the cooperation of other governments, especially governments that dislike U.S. foreign policy. Such necessary cooperation is difficult to maintain when the same governments or their allies face military threats or covert intelligence operations from the United States.

(4) Use International Courts

The United States has put its response to the attacks and the threat of terrorism in a state-to-state frame only for as long as it suits its goals. By refusing to treat those captured in the war against Afghanistan as prisoners of war, the United States takes the picture out of the statist frame. The Bush administration argues that the prisoners are illegal combatants not covered by international law as stated in the Geneva Convention. At the same time, it has decreed that it will not apply its domestic principles of due process to non-citizen suspects apprehended in the United States or elsewhere. Thus the United States declares before the world that it will not afford any non-Americans whom it apprehends and claims to connect with terrorism the protection of law. This stance is so outrageous that it has fomented dissent even within the Bush administration and from within the ranks of its most loyal ally, Britain. In response, the administration has slightly altered its stated position, but not its treatment of prisoners.

U.S. vice president, Dick Cheney said, "Terrorists don't deserve the same guarantees and safeguards that would be used for an American citizen going through the normal judicial process" (*International Herald Tribune*, November 16, 2001). This statement reveals Cheney's scorn for the most elementary principles of due process: presumably it is up to judicial procedure to determine who is and who is not a criminal.

If the September 11 attacks are seen as crimes against humanity rather than against only the United States, an international tribunal instituted by the UN, based on the model of those for the ex-Yugoslavia and Rwanda, with the processing judges coming from Western and Islamic countries, would be appropriate.

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Such a tribunal would also have the advantage of posing the conflict not as one between the United States and Islam but as one between the entire international community and a limited group of criminals. In the end, ad hoc tribunals should be handed over to a permanent International Criminal Court, approved by treaty in Rome in July 1998 (with opposition from the United States), and slowly being ratified by states around the world.

We have heard several arguments against using international courts to prosecute persons suspected of performing or materially contributing to terrorist acts: It's too slow, too expensive, and would wrongly give terrorists a forum in which to air their ideas. We find all these reasons disingenuous. It should not be any slower to pursue due process on an international level than at a state level; the speed the United States seeks seems to be at the expense of due process. Likewise, it should not be much more expensive to pay for an international trial than a state-level trial, if both are fair. Finally, any public court proceeding, at any level, offers opportunities for actors to express their point of view on the alleged crimes; that is what they are for, and that is, of course, why the military tribunals planned by the Bush administration will not be open to public view.

(5) Narrow Global Inequalities

Since September 2001, many commentators have suggested that the vast disparities in wealth and well being between northern hemispheric societies such as the United States, the European Union, or Japan on the one hand, and the Middle East and South Asia on the other hand, be taken into account in understanding what causes and motivates individuals to join or form terrorist groups. We agree with those who respond that these structural injustices neither justify nor excuse criminal acts. Nor do these circumstances even explain terrorist acts, for there are many poor places that appear not to nurture people who join international terrorist organizations.

Still, a huge portion of the world's population lives in horrible poverty. We believe, as do many others in both the less developed and more developed parts of the world, that this poverty persists at least partly because of policies of the rich states, private corporations based in those countries, and international organizations in which those states and corporations have disproportionate power. Even those skeptical of this claim, however, should condemn the apparent unwillingness of the people and governments of the United States, Europe, and Japan to effect significant transfers of capital, technological capacity, and goods to raise the quality of life of the world's poorest people. There is no doubt that such indifference amid affluence fosters resentment in many corners of the world and endangers peace and prosperity for many outside the shanty towns.

At another tragic moment in history, with the defeat of fascism at the end of the Second World War, the United States understood that its security and prosperity depended on the rebirth of Europe. To enable this rebirth, the United States dedicated a huge amount of resources to the Marshall Plan, to rebuild the infrastructure of devastated European societies. No development aid program since that time has been so large in scale and so effective. That this was done once should give hope that having the will opens the way to invest in poor societies to enable them to flourish. For decades social movements and governments in the less developed world have demanded that the powerful economic actors of the world stop exploiting their resources and workers and start programs of real investment in the infrastructure and human beings of poor countries. The developed world remains largely unresponsive to this plea. Official development assistance from the countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in 1998 was 0.24 percent of their combined GNPs, and private funding is also paltry.

Even the Bush administration cannot avoid acknowledging this moral imperative. It could not stay away from the UN-sponsored conference on rebuilding Afghanistan in January 2002, as it walked out on the Conference on Racism in August 2001 and the Climate Change Conference in December 2001. At the January conference the United States pledged a mere $300 million for the first year, and Japan and Europe each pledged $500 million for the first two and a

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half years. The World Bank estimates that at least $4.9 *billion* is required for two and a half years to help rebuild Afghanistan at the most minimal level. Even at this moment of crisis, the rich countries of the world remain unbelievably stingy, and the poor people of the world are watching.

The world will not be able to move toward fair, inclusive, and effective global governance without major reallocation of economic, technological, and organizational capacities to reduce existing global disparities in the quality of life and institutional order. For such ends we need new and strengthened international institutions that better represent the voices and perspectives of all the world's peoples, with more ability to promote global redistribution than existing international finance and development institutions such as the World Bank. Without the global equivalent of the Marshall Plan, even the best designed cooperative efforts to respond to transnational organized crime can only be defensive and intermittent in their effectiveness. No justice, no peace. ●

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Ends, Means, and Politics

By Jeffrey C. Isaac

POLITICS IS ABOUT ends and means—about the values that we pursue and the methods by which we pursue them. In a perfect world, there would be a perfect congruence between ends and means: our ends would always be achievable through means that were fully consistent with them; the tension between ends and means would not exist. But then there would be no need to pursue just ends, for these would already be realized. Such a world of absolute justice lies beyond politics.

The left has historically been burdened by the image of such a world. Marx's vision of the "riddle of history solved" and Engels's vision of the "withering away of the state" were two canonical expressions of the belief in an end-state in which perfect justice could be achieved once and for all. But the left has also developed a concurrent tradition of serious *strategic thinking* about politics. Centered around but not reducible to classical Marxism, this tradition has focused on such questions as the relations of class, party, and state; the consequences of parliamentary versus revolutionary strategies of social change; the problem of hegemony and the limits of mass politics; the role of violence in class struggle; and the relationship between class struggle and war. These questions preoccupied Karl Kautsky, V.I. Lenin, Leon Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg, Georg Lukàcs, and Antonio Gramsci—and also John Dewey, Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone, George Orwell, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus. The history of left political thought in the twentieth century is a history of serious arguments about ends and means in politics, arguments about how to pursue the difficult work of achieving social justice in an unjust world. Many of these arguments were foolish, many of their conclusions were specious, and many of the actions followed from them were barbaric. The problem of ends and means in politics was often handled poorly, but it was nonetheless *taken seriously*, even if so many on the left failed to think clearly about the proper relationship between their perfectionist visions and their often Machiavellian strategies.

What is striking about much of the political discussion on the left today is its failure to

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engage this earlier tradition of argument. The left, particularly the campus left—by which I mean "progressive" faculty and student groups, often centered around labor solidarity organizations and campus Green affiliates—has become moralistic rather than politically serious. Some of its moralizing—about Chiapas, Palestine, and Iraq—continues the third worldism that plagued the New Left in its waning years. Some of it—about globalization and sweatshops—is new and in some ways promising (see my "Thinking About the Antisweatshop Movement," *Dissent*, Fall 2001). But what characterizes much campus left discourse is a substitution of moral rhetoric about evil policies or institutions for a sober consideration of what might improve or replace them, how the improvement might be achieved, and what the likely costs, as well as the benefits, are of any reasonable strategy.

One consequence of this tendency is a failure to worry about methods of securing political support through democratic means or to recognize the distinctive value of democracy itself. It is not that conspiratorial or antidemocratic means are promoted. On the contrary, the means employed tend to be preeminently democratic—petitions, demonstrations, marches, boycotts, corporate campaigns, vigorous public criticism. And it is not that political democracy is derided. Projects such as the Green Party engage with electoral politics, locally and nationally, in order to win public office and achieve political objectives.

But what is absent is a sober reckoning with the preoccupations and opinions of the vast majority of Americans, who are not drawn to vocal denunciations of the International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization and who do not believe that the discourse of "anti-imperialism" speaks to their lives. Equally absent is critical thinking about why citizens of liberal democratic states—including most workers and the poor—value liberal democracy and subscribe to what Jürgen Habermas has called "constitutional patriotism": a patriotic identification with the democratic state because of the civil, political, and social rights it defends. Vicarious identifications with Subcommandante Marcos or starving Iraqi children allow left activists to express a genuine solidarity with the oppressed elsewhere that is surely legitimate in a globalizing age. But these symbolic avowals are not an effective way of contending for political influence or power in the society in which these activists live.

The ease with which the campus left responded to September 11 by rehearsing an all-too-familiar narrative of American militarism and imperialism is not simply disturbing. It is a sign of this left's alienation from the society in which it operates (the worst examples of this are statements of the Student Peace Action Coalition Network, which declare that "the United States Government is the world's greatest terror organization," and suggest that "homicidal psychopaths of the United States Government" engineered the World Trade Center attacks as a pretext for imperialist aggression. See http://www.gospan.org). Many left activists seem more able to identify with (idealized versions of) Iraqi or Afghan civilians than with American citizens, whether these are the people who perished in the Twin Towers or the rest of us who legitimately fear that we might be next. This is not because of any "disloyalty." Charges like that lack intellectual or political merit. It is because of a debilitating *moralism*; because it is easier to denounce wrong than to take real responsibility for correcting it, easier to locate and to oppose a remote evil than to address a proximate difficulty. The campus left says what it thinks. But it exhibits little interest in how and why so many Americans think differently.

The "peace" demonstrations organized across the country within a few days of the September 11 attacks—in which local Green Party activists often played a crucial role—were, whatever else they were, a sign of their organizers' lack of judgment and common sense. Although they often expressed genuine horror about the terrorism, they focused their energy not on the legitimate fear and outrage of American citizens but rather on the evils of the American government and its widely supported response to the terror. Hardly anyone was paying attention, but they alienated anyone who was. This was utterly predictable. And that is my point. The predictable consequences did

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not matter. What mattered was simply the expression of righteous indignation about what is wrong with the United States, as if September 11 hadn't really happened. Whatever one thinks about America's deficiencies, it must be acknowledged that a political praxis preoccupation with this is foolish and self-defeating.

The other, more serious consequence of this moralizing tendency is the failure to think seriously about global *politics*. The campus left is rightly interested in the ills of global capitalism. But politically it seems limited to two options: expressions of "solidarity" with certain oppressed groups—Palestinians but not Syrians, Afghan civilians (though not those who welcome liberation from the Taliban), but not Bosnians or Kosovars or Rwandans—and automatic opposition to American foreign policy in the name of anti-imperialism. The economic discourse of the campus left is a universalist discourse of human needs and workers rights; but it is accompanied by a refusal to think in *political* terms about the realities of states, international institutions, violence, and power. This refusal is linked to a peculiar strain of pacifism, according to which any use of military force by the United States is viewed as aggression or militarism.

A CASE IN POINT is a petition circulated on the campus of Indiana University within days of September 11. Drafted by the Bloomington Peace Coalition, it opposed what was then an imminent war in Afghanistan against al-Qaeda, and called for peace. It declared: "Retaliation will not lead to healing; rather it will harm innocent people and further the cycle of violence. Rather than engage in military aggression, those in authority should apprehend and charge those individuals believed to be directly responsible for the attacks and try them in a court of law in accordance with due process of international law." This declaration was hardly unique. Similar statements were issued on college campuses across the country, by local student or faculty coalitions, the national Campus Greens, 9-11peace.org, and the National Youth and Student Peace Coalition. As Global Exchange declared in its antiwar statement of September 11: "vengeance offers no relief. . . retaliation can never guarantee healing. . . and to meet violence with violence breeds more rage and more senseless deaths. Only love leads to peace with justice, while hate takes us toward war and injustice." On this view military action of any kind is figured as "aggression" or "vengeance"; harm to innocents, whether substantial or marginal, intended or unintended, is absolutely proscribed; legality is treated as having its own force, independent of any means of enforcement; and, most revealingly, "healing" is treated as the principal goal of any legitimate response.

None of these points withstands serious scrutiny. A military response to terrorist aggression is not in any obvious sense an act of aggression, unless any military response—or at least any U.S. military response—is simply *defined* as aggression. While any justifiable military response should certainly be governed by just-war principles, the criterion of absolute harm avoidance would rule out the possibility of *any* military response. It is virtually impossible either to "apprehend" and prosecute terrorists or to put an end to terrorist networks without the use of military force, for the "criminals" in question are not law-abiding citizens but mass murderers, and there are no police to "arrest" them. And, finally, while "healing" is surely a legitimate moral goal, it is not clear that it is a *political* goal. Justice, however, most assuredly is a political goal. The most notable thing about the Bloomington statement is its avoidance of political justice. Like many antiwar texts, it calls for "social justice abroad." It supports redistributing wealth. But criminal and retributive justice, protection against terrorist violence, or the political enforcement of the minimal conditions of global civility—these are unmentioned.

They are unmentioned because to broach them is to enter a terrain that the campus left is unwilling to enter—the terrain of violence, a realm of complex choices and dirty hands. This aversion to violence is understandable and in some ways laudable. America's use of violence has caused much harm in the world, from Southeast Asia to Central and Latin America to Africa. The so-called "Vietnam Syndrome" was the product of a real learning experience that should not be forgotten. In addition, the

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destructive capacities of modern warfare—which jeopardize the civilian/combatant distinction, and introduce the possibility of enormous ecological devastation—make war under any circumstances something to be feared. No civilized person should approach the topic of war with anything other than great trepidation.

And yet the left's reflexive hostility toward violence in the international domain is strange. It is inconsistent with avowals of "materialism" and evocations of "struggle," especially on the part of those many who are *not* pacifists; it is in tension with a commitment to human emancipation (is there no cause for which it is justifiable to fight?); and it is oblivious to the tradition of left thinking about ends and means. To compare the debates within the left about the two world wars or the Spanish Civil War with the predictable "anti-militarism" of today's campus left is to compare a discourse that was serious about political power with a discourse that is not.

This unpragmatic approach has become a hallmark of post–cold war left commentary, from the Gulf War protests of 1991, to the denunciation of the 1999 U.S.-led NATO intervention in Kosovo, to the current post–September 11 antiwar movement. In each case protesters have raised serious questions about U.S. policy and its likely consequences, but in a strikingly ineffective way. They sound a few key themes: the broader context of grievances that supposedly explains why Saddam Hussein, or Slobodan Milosevic, or Osama bin Laden have done what they have done; the hypocrisy of official U.S. rhetoric, which denounces terrorism even though the U.S. government has often supported terrorism; the harm that will come to ordinary Iraqi or Serbian or Afghan citizens as a result of intervention; and the cycle of violence that is likely to ensue. These are important issues. But they typically are raised by left critics not to promote real debate about practical alternatives, but to avoid such a debate or to trump it.

As a result, the most important political questions are simply not asked. It is assumed that U.S. military intervention is an act of "aggression," but no consideration is given to the aggression to which intervention is a response. The status quo ante in Afghanistan is not, as peace activists would have it, peace, but rather terrorist violence abetted by a regime—the Taliban—that rose to power through brutality and repression. This requires us to ask a question that most "peace" activists would prefer not to ask: *What should be done to respond to the violence of a Saddam Hussein, or a Milosevic, or a Taliban regime?* What means are likely to stop violence and bring criminals to justice? Calls for diplomacy and international law are well intended and important; they implicate a decent and civilized ethic of global order. But they are also vague and empty, because they are not accompanied by any account of how diplomacy or international law can work effectively to address the problem at hand. The campus left offers no such account. To do so would require it to contemplate tragic choices in which moral goodness is of limited utility. Here what matters is not purity of intention but the intelligent exercise of power.

Power is not a dirty word or an unfortunate feature of the world. It is the core of politics. Power is the ability to effect outcomes in the world. Politics, in large part, involves contests over the distribution and use of power. To accomplish anything in the political world, one must attend to the means that are necessary to bring it about. And to develop such means is to develop, and to exercise, power. To say this is not to say that power is beyond morality. It is to say that power is not reducible to morality.

As writers such as Niccolo Machiavelli, Max Weber, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Hannah Arendt have taught, an unyielding concern with moral goodness undercuts political responsibility. The concern may be morally laudable, reflecting a kind of personal integrity, but it suffers from three fatal flaws: (1) It fails to see that the purity of one's intention does not ensure the achievement of what one intends. Abjuring violence or refusing to make common cause with morally compromised parties may seem like the right thing; but if such tactics entail impotence, then it is hard to view them as serving any moral good beyond the clean conscience of their supporters; (2) it fails to see that in a world of real violence and injustice, moral purity is not simply a form of powerlessness; it is often a form of complicity in injus-

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tice. This is why, from the standpoint of politics—as opposed to religion—pacifism is always a potentially immoral stand. In categorically repudiating violence, it refuses in principle to oppose certain violent injustices with any effect; and (3) it fails to see that politics is as much about unintended consequences as it is about intentions; it is the effects of action, rather than the motives of action, that is most significant. Just as the alignment with "good" may engender impotence, it is often the pursuit of "good" that generates evil. This is the lesson of communism in the twentieth century: it is not enough that one's goals be sincere or idealistic; it is equally important, always, to ask about the effects of pursuing these goals and to judge these effects in pragmatic and historically contextualized ways. Moral absolutism inhibits this judgment. It alienates those who are not true believers. It promotes arrogance. And it undermines political effectiveness.

WHAT WOULD IT mean for the American left right now to take seriously the centrality of means in politics? First, it would mean taking seriously the specific means employed by the September 11 attackers—terrorism. There is a tendency in some quarters of the left to assimilate the death and destruction of September 11 to more ordinary (and still deplorable) injustices of the world system—the starvation of children in Africa, or the repression of peasants in Mexico, or the continued occupation of the West Bank and Gaza by Israel. But this assimilation is only possible by ignoring the specific modalities of September 11. It is true that in Mexico, Palestine, and elsewhere, too many innocent people suffer, and that is wrong. It may even be true that the experience of suffering is equally terrible in each case. But neither the Mexican nor the Israeli government has ever hijacked civilian airliners and deliberately flown them into crowded office buildings in the middle of cities where innocent civilians work and live, with the intention of killing thousands of people. Al-Qaeda did precisely this. That does not make the other injustices unimportant. It simply makes them different. It makes the September 11 hijackings distinctive, in their defining and malevolent purpose—to kill people and to create terror and havoc. This was not an ordinary injustice. It was an *extraordinary* injustice. The premise of terrorism is the sheer superfluousness of human life. This premise is inconsistent with civilized living anywhere. It threatens people of every race and class, every ethnicity and religion. Because it threatens everyone, and threatens values central to any decent conception of a good society, it must be fought. And it must be fought in a way commensurate with its malevolence. Ordinary injustice can be remedied. Terrorism can only be stopped.

Second, it would mean frankly acknowledging something well understood, often too eagerly embraced, by the twentieth century Marxist left—that it is often politically necessary to employ morally troubling means in the name of morally valid ends. A just or even a better society can only be realized *in and through political practice;* in our complex and bloody world, it will sometimes be necessary to respond to barbarous tyrants or criminals, with whom moral suasion won't work. In such situations our choice is not between the wrong that confronts us and our ideal vision of a world beyond wrong. It is between the wrong that confronts us and the means—perhaps the dangerous means—we have to employ in order to oppose it. In such situations there is a danger that "realism" can become a rationale for the Machiavellian worship of power. But equally great is the danger of a righteousness that translates, in effect, into a refusal to act in the face of wrong. What is one to do? Proceed with caution. Avoid casting oneself as the incarnation of pure goodness locked in a Manichean struggle with evil. Be wary of violence. Look for alternative means when they are available, and support the development of such means when they are not. And never sacrifice democratic freedoms and open debate. Above all, ask the hard questions about the situation at hand, the means available, and the likely effectiveness of different strategies.

Most striking about the campus left's response to September 11 was its refusal to ask these questions. Its appeals to "international law" were naïve. It exaggerated the likely negative consequences of a military response, but failed to consider the consequences of failing

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to act decisively against terrorism. In the best of all imaginable worlds, it might be possible to defeat al-Qaeda without using force and without dealing with corrupt regimes and political forces like the Northern Alliance. But in this world it is not possible. And this, alas, is the only world that exists. To be politically responsible is to engage this world and to consider the choices that it presents. To refuse to do this is to evade responsibility. Such a stance may indicate a sincere refusal of unsavory choices. But it should never be mistaken for a serious political commitment. ●

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A Failure of Nerve

Murray Hausknecht

It is very dangerous to teach religion in the wrong way. In order to achieve progress, you have to teach religion in its proper form.

—Mehmet Nuri Yilmaz, head of Turkey's Religious Affairs Administration

In our opinion the people who would elect the members [of the Saudi Consultative Council] would not choose the right people. So therefore we prefer to appoint and to choose, but within certain specifications and the rules.

—Sheik Muhammad al-Jubeir, Chairman of the Saudi Consultative Council

Are we supposed to read them the Miranda rights, hire a flamboyant defense lawyer, bring them back to the United States to create a new cable network of Osama TV...provide a worldwide platform from which propaganda can be developed?

—John Ashcroft, U.S. attorney general, defending the proposed military tribunals

Senator Mitch McConnell, Republican of Kentucky, said that if terrorists were brought back to the United States, "we'd have the potential for a repeat of the O. J. Simpson trial, complete with grandstanding by defense lawyers."

—*New York Times* account of a hearing of the Senate Judiciary Committee, November 18, 2001

AT FIRST GLANCE there appears to be no difference between the American, Saudi, and Turkish officials; all seem to express a lack of commitment to democratic institutions. Yilmaz worries that incorrect religious ideas may be taught; al-Jubeir doesn't like democratic elections because the wrong people might be elected; our officials are unhappy because juries can return wrong verdicts or provide occasions for the spread of wrong ideas. The views of the Turkish and Saudi officials are hardly surprising, because one was raised in a nation where the defense of secularism has been a prime objective of regimes since early in the last century and the other was born into a society that has never known democracy. Of the American instances, though, something more must be said. The courage of people more committed to democracy than McConnell and Ashcroft seems to falter or fail altogether when confronted with some of the actual consequences of democratic institutions—commitment does not ensure against a failure of nerve. And when the political leaders of a democracy lose their nerve, its institutions may be at serious risk.

The O. J. Simpson trial, of which McConnell is so contemptuous, is an example of an American institution in practice. The prosecution of an African-American celebrity accused of murdering his white ex-wife and her boyfriend stimulated an outpouring of tabloid journalism that reveled in the spectacle of a brilliant black defense attorney who ultimately played the "race

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card" in dueling with a prosecution team of a white woman and a black man. Few people would want an O. J. Simpson trial to become the norm, but public trials are inherently vulnerable to becoming mere public spectacles laced with appeals to prejudice. To try Osama bin Laden with all constitutional guarantees in place requires a kind of courage somewhat morally akin to the physical courage of a firefighter entering a burning building. Ashcroft and McConnell are examples of a failure of nerve that now pervades all branches of government and large sections of the American public.

If our system of justice can be an unnerving experience, so can democracy itself. Certainty is not easily achieved or maintained in a democratic society; whether the focus is on beliefs and values or actual behavior, individuals are constantly challenged by others with different ideas and ways of living. Freedom of religion, for example, means that the truths proclaimed by a religion must be defended, if only implicitly, against the truths others preach. Academic freedom means that parents will find their offspring returning from college with strange ideas—not exactly what the parents had in mind when they sent them off. Challenges to certainty and the serenity of mind it brings are inevitable consequences of democracy.

To be sure, in the course of everyday life practically no one is upset because neighbors believe in different truths, or worries about the weird ideas their kids may pick up in school. Trouble begins when a potential source of disquiet can no longer be easily ignored. Thus, when election rhetoric centers on *Roe v. Wade*, both pro-choice and right-to-life advocates must contend with the other's arguments; their certainties are under attack. It is difficult to remain indifferent to or detached from a matter of civic concern when there is widespread discussion of children's relatively easy access to pornography via the Internet. When issues involve salient interests, a widespread failure of nerve generates support for restrictions on civil liberties.

Some issues, of course, are salient only for narrow segments of the public. Relatively few people are so disturbed by the sorcery Harry Potter and his friends practice that they wish to ban the books from the local library, although probably more would like to drop *Huckleberry Finn* from school curriculums. In any event, regardless of whether an issue attracts large or relatively small numbers to antidemocratic causes, these movements are and have been endemic in our society since its beginnings—we are a nation marked by strong beliefs in democratic institutions intertwined with anxieties and fears of some of their consequences. These fears make democracies fragile structures, and at no time are they subject to greater stress than in times of war.

In wartime, especially now when even oceans do not shield civilian populations, limitations on liberty receive wider and quicker assent from the public. Although some restrictions are accepted as rational responses to real dangers—it would be unreasonable to object to luggage inspections in face of airplane highjackings and planted bombs—other regulations are more problematic and represent a form of collateral damage that war wreaks on institutions. Very few people would normally approve the monitoring of conversations between lawyers and jailed clients, but now it is permissible in cases of alleged terrorists. The new rule gains public support because a heightened sense of patriotism strengthens an ever-present xenophobia. The failure of nerve it illustrates is perhaps more apparent in the "invitation" to persons of Middle East descent to "volunteer" for interviews with police and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. There was small likelihood that the interviews would yield important information; yet to forgo them would involve some risk of overlooking potential terrorists. On the other hand, there was a greater probability that the invitations would feed racial and ethnic prejudices. The unwillingness of the administration to run this risk, even as it insisted that the war on terrorism is not a war on Muslims, is a sign that it lacks the courage required of democratic leaders.

In his defense of military tribunals, George W. Bush provided the formal excuse for subordinating liberty to security: "...we must not let foreign enemies use the forums of liberty to destroy liberty itself." The premise that ends justify means can only be accepted without debate in totalitarian and authoritarian societies where the security of the regime is always the prime objective. In democracies, dedicated to main-

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taining both order and freedom, whether the end of security deserves to trump liberty always requires public discussion. The unilateral imposition of the security rules without congressional debate or consultation is another indication of a fear of democratic processes.

Sometimes curtailments of liberty in wartime are shrugged off as necessary evils that will disappear at war's end when the status quo ante will be restored. This is a reasonable expectation only if the war on terrorism is a war as the term is customarily understood: an armed conflict between nations that ends when one party sues for peace and accepts the conditions for surrender. The war on terrorism is a metaphorical war, and almost by definition an endless war. "Terrorism" is an abstraction, and abstractions cannot sue for peace and surrender. The war on drugs, another metaphorical war, has gone on for decades without an end in sight, because new recruits to the illegal traffic in drugs constantly replace those busted by the police. Similarly, economic and political conditions, particularly those in the Middle East and Asia that make people susceptible to the attractions of terrorist ideologies, will not disappear soon—the war on terrorism is destined to become another war without end.

THE CONSEQUENCES for liberty of the war against drugs have been admirably described by the distinguished conservative jurist Richard A. Posner in the December 2001 *Atlantic*. Among the many methods he cites that the police have relied upon are "paid informants ...wiretaps...the infiltration of suspect organizations, random searches...the 'profiling' of likely suspects on the basis of ethnic or racial identity or national origin, compulsory drug tests, and other intrusive methods that put pressure on civil liberties." Many of these measures bear more than a passing resemblance to those instituted at the start of the war on terrorism. Because terrorism is a salient threat to all, we can legitimately expect that the war on terrorism will put an even stronger pressure on civil liberties; the status quo ante may never reappear.

Among the current pressures on liberty is the proposal to try accused terrorists by military tribunals rather than holding the usual public criminal trials. Some have argued that the latter can provoke hostage-taking and that, at the very least, the trials should not be held until after the war is over or terrorist networks seriously weakened. But if the war is interminable—and who will make the judgment about the strength of the networks?—the presumed risks of public trials will always be present, and the period for which prisoners can be detained may stretch to unconscionable lengths.

To fear for one's life in the aftermath of terrorist attacks and to expect that the government will take steps to increase security is normal and rational. Responsible leaders must respond to those fears and expectations. But leadership in a democratic society requires more than new security measures and speeches strengthening the nation's "resolve" to defeat its enemies. In the past, during the U.S. Civil War and two world wars, fear and the need for physical and psychological security led to violations of civil liberties.

A responsible leadership must be alert to the dangers of committing similar violations in trying to safeguard the nation and reinforcing resolve; it should demonstrate an active concern with preserving liberty as well as security. Ashcroft's defense of the administration's anti-terrorism proposals dramatically illustrated a lack of such concern. In his testimony last December before a Senate committee, he said critics "only aid terrorists, for they erode our national unity and diminish our resolve." Similarly, the rule suspending the right of confidentiality between lawyers and jailed clients accused of terrorism is roughly comparable to Abraham Lincoln's suspension of habeas corpus. The formal justification for the rule—that suspects may transmit coded information to other terrorists through their lawyers—is not an example of a leader struggling with the admittedly difficult task of preserving the proper balance between liberty and security. It seems, rather, to be a case of a leader too ready to sacrifice liberty on the altar of security.

The answer, then, to John Ashcroft's question is, yes, the criminals responsible for the murders on September 11 must be tried the same way other criminals in our society are tried. Anything else would be a betrayal of democracy. ●

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In Search of Root Causes

Benjamin Ross

A CERTAIN KIND of leftist just can't help blaming American imperialism for September 11. In the search for "root causes," their instinct to designate the United States as villain overwhelms their spirit of critical inquiry. Overlooking the perpetrators' frank expressions of a thoroughly medieval worldview, they quickly conclude that terrorism must result from poverty and oppression. While none defend the terrorist acts of September 11, once they speak ritual words of condemnation, they move the discussion to the need to understand a somewhat overzealous response to American-sponsored injustice.

There's an odd congruence here with the views of the big-business right. Advocates of the corporate trade agenda quickly seized on the attacks to justify everything from fast-track trade negotiations to making entrepreneurs in China pay royalties on T-shirt logos. Poverty breeds terrorism, the reasoning goes, and free trade is the solution to world poverty. The free traders' cure for world poverty is different from that of anti-imperialists, to be sure, but their diagnosis of the terrorist disease is the same.

Some on both sides go on to accuse anyone who questions their theoretical systems of giving ideological comfort to terrorism. Noam Chomsky suggests that left intellectuals who do not join in his critique of American imperialism "increase the likelihood of further atrocities like that of Sept. 11." Bush administration trade negotiator Robert Zoellick doesn't go quite so far, accusing critics of trade treaties merely of "intellectual connections" with terrorists. But the breadth of Zoellick's denunciations, lumping moderate critics of free trade with violent fundamentalists, compensates for their lack of Chomskian specificity.

For the Chomsky-Zoellick school of analysis, it matters little how well preconceived theories fit the facts about the men who crashed airliners into the World Trade Center. Engineering students living in Europe on checks from home must have been the wretched of the earth. Their yearning for theocracy was really a hunger for bread and freedom. The blame for terror falls on poverty, on an economic mechanism that impoverishes—whether the offending system is labeled "imperialism" or "protectionism" is immaterial to the argument—and ultimately on the ideology that underlies that system. For these thinkers, theory trumps reality.

Refuting such ideas is a necessary if tiresome task, and those who have undertaken it deserve attention and sympathy. Chomsky's critics, some serious and many not, are too numerous to list. Zoellick's ideas, too, have attracted notice, although only Alan Tonelson seems to have observed how closely his take on terrorism resembles the "anti-imperialist" view. My intention here is not to pursue those disputes, but to search for root causes of a different kind. What accounts for the persistence of such thinking? Why does it so resist refutation by mere facts?

There's no mystery in how a Zoellick can gain influence. Most directly, and no doubt most important, his policies serve the short-term financial interests of multinational corporations. One needn't subscribe to conspiracy theories to see a Republican trade negotiator as a capitalist tool.

When Zoellick parses the roots of terrorism to advance his agenda, he is opportunistically seizing the argument closest at hand, but his rhetorical excess does more than that. It serves to cover a gaping hole in the free traders' reasoning. The traditional justification for free trade—that all nations benefit when each country specializes in the lines of work where

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it is most efficient—is ill-fitted to current circumstances. Notwithstanding the avowed aim of opening markets, very rarely will forthcoming trade treaties create new outlets for what American workers produce. The export of tangible goods has been overshadowed on the trade agenda by "intellectual property rights." These rights grant legally protected monopolies in the form of patents, trademarks, and copyrights. The owners—media giants, drug manufacturers, fashion conglomerates, and the like—now seek to give their privileges worldwide effect.

At the heart of economists' standard case for free trade is the glory of competition. Everyone benefits when trade barriers disappear, they contend, because production shifts to more efficient sources of supply when new competitors enter a market. But this appeal to competitive efficiency has lost its relevance. When trade treaties focus on intellectual property rights, they no longer encourage competition but suppress it. By connecting terrorism to free trade, Zoellick relocates the debate from economics to the terrain of metaphysics and takes a logical detour around this contradiction. "Trade is about more than economic efficiency," he declaims, "it reflects a system of values . . . . Just as the Cold War reflected a contest of values, so will this campaign against terrorism."

To discern the interests served by trade negotiators may not be hard, but a tougher riddle is posed by propensities deeply embedded in the left. Why the urge to explain the misdeeds of any anti-American tyrant, no matter how odious? Why the never-ending search for fault in our own actions? Is the left afflicted, as right-wing publicists often suggest, with a peculiar madness that drives its victims to the point of self-caricature? Or is there something in the wider society that nourishes such attitudes?

Homegrown anti-Americanism is nothing new, but today's extreme left is very different from that of half a century ago. Instead of True Believers subsuming their personal will to an absolute, we find extreme moral relativism that asks a question unknown to Leninists: Who am I to judge? And in the place of the Popular Front, striving to break out of immigrant communities into the wider society comes an impulse to self-isolation. American radicalism is no longer associated with any economic class. Instead, it is concentrated in a geographic and social territory set off by clear lines of cultural demarcation. In most communities the war on terrorism receives near-unanimous support. The climate is quite different on many university campuses and in the Berkeleys, Santa Monicas, and Takoma Parks—neighborhoods known for their concentrations of post-sixties radicals.

Paradoxically, it is the cultural delineation of the current left that points to its economic role. In a society saturated with consumer goods, cultural distinctions of all kinds are heavily promoted as a way of creating profitable marketing niches, and alternative lifestyles create demand for new products. The radical subculture, along its entire spectrum from confrontation to co-optation, is part of this process. With the Black Bloc, anarchism becomes fashion statement as well as political ideology. As styles age, they move toward the mainstream; on teenagers' clothes the peace symbol now has about the same significance as Tommy Hilfiger's name.

Indeed, the writer Thomas Frank argues that the cultural inheritance of the sixties plays a crucial role in sustaining consumer capitalism. Its stance of perpetual rebellion sheds new styles into ever-widening circles, engendering a perpetual demand for things that are different from what "everyone else" buys. This process of ceaseless differentiation creates the mechanism for continued economic expansion after markets have been sated with the identical goods turned out by mass-production industry.

Organic food exemplifies the cycle by which rebellious styles pass into the profitable mainstream. What once was hippie fare now graces yuppie tables. A chain of organic supermarkets, the Whole Food Stores, dominates the market, featuring high markups, nonunion labor, and new stores opening in upscale suburbs. The rebellious fringe seeks a new alternative, and the signature food of the antiglobalization movement is vegan.

In this light, the "subversive" political and

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cultural affinities of rock singers and movie actors are seen as just the opposite. Having transformed economic debates into stock market commentary and rendered labor unions nearly invisible, the media have pushed conflict between capital and labor off the radar screen of mass culture. When Hollywood promotes identity leftism, it is not undermining capitalism—which should surprise no one—but feeding fuel to the fires of consumer demand.

If the cultural left is being nurtured by corporate marketing strategies, its persistent anti-Americanism may seem surprising. But there is no contradiction here. The countercultural wing of the business world is itself peculiarly attracted to revolutionary tyrants, who have become such common marketing icons that the irony is hardly noticed.

The image of Che Guevara is an emblem of cool on T-shirts and posters. Featured on a limited-edition Swatch timepiece and on Fischer Revolution skis, it has appeared in ad campaigns for Apple computers and Smirnoff vodka. So ubiquitous has it become that *Newsweek* in 1997 published an essay on "Che Chic."

Mao Zedong, who clad a billion Chinese in identical garments, has long been a favorite of the fashion world. One Paris couturier offers a $350 Mao jacket that is sewn to order, with size and fabric specified over the Internet. Another designer inspired by the Great Helmsman is Vivienne Tam, who dresses Julia Roberts, Madonna, and Britney Spears. A peak of Tam's career was her 1995 "Mao collection," where models entered through a huge cut-out of Mao's profile.

This cult of violent revolution is not limited to creative types; it reaches into avant-garde executive suites. In a quotation spotted by Naomi Klein in *Fortune*, the president of MTV is described as "inherently an anti-establishment person. Anybody who comes along and says, 'Let's off the pig,' has got her ear."

What accounts for the magnetic attraction that the corporate publicity machine, when it chooses to promote some version of radicalism, feels toward violent and tyrannical forms of leftism? The obvious motivations provide an incomplete explanation. To be sure, violent revolution generates the stark images that marketers prize, while peaceful reform is often messy and undramatic. And corporations that strive to keep their own employees from organizing aren't much bothered by violations of labor rights elsewhere. But such reasons do not suffice to account fully for the phenomenon. Media conglomerates may not mind the suppression of Chinese and Cuban workers, but they can hardly think of Mao and Che as friends of capitalism.

The entertainment media's treatment of Vaclav Havel is a telling sign that the antidemocratic bias is deep seated. The Czech president, an avant-garde playwright, friend of Frank Zappa, and ardent admirer of the Velvet Underground, would seem perfectly suited to the role of counterculture hero. The story of his decades-long struggle for his country's freedom, although nonviolent, does not lack for drama. Yet Havel is conspicuously passed over in the ceaseless promotion of the music he is so close to, and the use of his image to advertise vodka, skis, or haute couture would be unthinkable. The conclusion is hard to escape: It is precisely because Havel is a committed democrat that he does not fit the role assigned to counterculture celebrities.

In the last analysis, disdain for democratic rebellion is inherent in the entire project of the corporate promoters of the counterculture. For these philosophers, the point is neither to interpret the world nor to change it, but to sell to it. In a postindustrial economy, the unique selling proposition is difference; the aim is not to unite the people, but to subdivide market niches. To this end, they want a new minority, a subculture of self-defined radicals that serves as a distinct market in itself and, more important, incubates new fashions that spread to wider circles. Any appeal to the society at large would be superfluous, if not directly counterproductive.

This role suits a certain kind of left, one that sheds concrete tasks and defines itself by its ability to embody the metaphysical essence of leftness. This conception represents the logical conclusion of an evolution that began with Lenin. As long as the proletariat was conceived, at bottom, as a bunch of people who worked

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in factories, one was unavoidably responsible to those people, and socialism remained a democratic movement. Communism redefined the proletariat as an ideal type, one that real workers might or might not attain, and Mao went on to sever altogether the connection with factory work. The rebellion of the marketers dispenses completely with demands and goals; the only content is the participants' self-definition as rebels. Capitalist revolutionaries' instinctive empathy for their communist counterparts is rooted in a common understanding of what it really is that revolution, in the end, is about.

This, then, is the corporate version of rebellion. So assiduously has it been publicized that the understanding of radicalism as a potpourri of trendy cultural gestures has become deeply imprinted in American culture. Automatic sympathy for the anti-American tyrant of the day is not an accidental add on, but a part of the package, reflecting the underlying convergence of marketing and cultural contestation. Knowing no other left, rebellious spirits often step unthinkingly into roles prepared for them in this caricature of one.

The parallels between the schools of reflexive anti-Americanism and big-business globalism are far from exact, but they are multiple and they are suggestive. Similarly flawed analyses of the September 11 terrorist attacks reflect the same underlying intellectual disease: theoretical systems that are justified by metaphysical assertion, regardless of how they stand up to facts. There's even an intriguing commonality between the economic sectors that promote the two groups. Free traders overtly support the interests of multinational corporations; cultural radicals speak the language of antiglobalization but often allow themselves to fall into molds prepared by Hollywood and Madison Avenue. The overlap is incomplete; protection of drug patents is high on the agenda of trade negotiators, whereas no one would use Che Guevara to sell a cancer treatment. But for the most part, the sponsors of the identity left and globalization are the same brand marketers, media conglomerates, and purveyors of fashion—sectors that profit not by filling material wants, but by satisfying psychic needs.

The Chomskys and Zoellicks have no doubt got it wrong about Islamic fundamentalism; economic determinism is a poor guide indeed to the root causes of that movement. But economics is still the key to multinational business. And it's not without value for understanding ideologies that are nourished by corporate strategy. ●

BENJAMIN ROSS wrote "Suburbs, Status, and Sprawl" in the Winter 2001 issue of *Dissent*.

To Our Contributors

A few suggestions:

(1) Be sure to keep a copy of your manuscript. And please remember that we can't consider articles unless they're accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

(2) Please don't write to ask whether we're interested in such and such an article—it makes for useless correspondence. Look at our last few issues to see if your idea fits in. Or take a chance and send us your article. We will not consider manuscripts submitted simultaneously to several publications.

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THE EDITORS

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Patriotism and Community

Amy D. Burke

In the days and weeks after September 11, many Americans talked of a nation pulling together, of a people unified in horror at the terrorists' slaughter of so many innocent lives and unified in support of our national effort to root out terrorists and the sources of terrorism worldwide.

Supposedly, we have never worked more together, thought more about each other, believed more in the righteousness of our American creed, or had warmer, fuzzier feelings about our neighbors—at least not for quite some time. Reflecting these new feelings, President George W. Bush said in his State of the Union address, "None of us would ever wish the evil that was done on September the 11th. Yet after America was attacked, it was as if our entire country looked into a mirror and saw our better selves. We were reminded that we are citizens, with obligations to each other, to our country, and to history. We began to think less of the goods we can accumulate, and more about the good we can do."

And since September 11, Americans do report markedly changed attitudes. In a February *American Prospect* article, Harvard's Robert Putnam, prominent chronicler of growing American alienation and declining social capital, reports that Americans are now "Bowling Together"—or at least that we say we'd like to do so. A December 2001 Pew Research Center poll found that 78 percent of Americans now say religion's influence in society is growing, up from 37 percent who said so a few months prior to the attacks. Only 16 percent of respondents, however, report attending religious services more now than before the 11th. In addition, 37 percent said they would make efforts to spend more time with their families during the holidays, and 54 percent of parents said they are trying to spend more time with their children.

Putnam's findings confirm these trends. In his article he reported that "trust in government, trust in the police, and interest in politics are all up. Compared with a year ago, Americans are somewhat more likely to have attended a political meeting or to have worked on a community project." Americans also trust each other more, from strangers to neighbors, and this proved true across ethnic and racial lines.

The moment *seems* ripe for a revival of contemporary liberalism, whose underlying faith is in the power and purpose of government to bring about positive change, to fight on behalf of average Americans, to even the playing field somewhat, and to reduce the ill effects of poverty. This idea about government endured for some time in the last century, through and after the New Deal, and for good reason. For "had not government won the war, ended the Depression, built the highways, brought electricity to the farmlands, vanquished the economic terror of old-age?" Michael Kelly asked in January's *Atlantic*.

Although American faith in government now has more to do with waging a war and securing the homeland, some suggest that these experiences may remind Americans just why a strong national government is necessary in both war and peace. It is unlikely, however, that we will learn that lesson anytime soon given the cult of individualism that liberalism and capitalism together have institutionalized in our country. We would need to alter our physical surroundings, which have been designed to keep people away from each other rather than to connect them. We would need a president interested in harnessing the forces of government—an unabashed liberal rather than an ideological conservative in the White House.

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Our talk of national unity is bittersweet because, in so many ways, we are a nation ill-prepared to work together in meaningful ways, willing to wave flags but not hold hands. Patriotic talk and behavior come easily to us—as they typically have and always should when our nation is engaged in war. However, one need only be cut off dangerously on the highway by a car with flags flying to know that such patriotism is often skin deep. Americans report strong feelings for their neighbors and more trust in strangers, but most of our lives have returned to an odd state of normalcy in the midst of such profound grief and shock. How many Americans have really connected with their neighbors or strangers in lasting ways since the attacks?

A byproduct of our liberal democracy, as Alexis de Tocqueville noted, is an individualism that inclines us to look after ourselves and our increasingly small and scattered nuclear families rather than our neighbors, our communities, or our nation. Participation in local government and civic associations used to combat this cultural tendency, and yet, especially during the last few decades, it would seem that individualism has won. This is not surprising since our emphasis on individual rights leads us to carve out our own personal spheres and gives us the justification for doing so. Once such rugged individualism takes hold, it makes collective action difficult at best.

Participatory democracy, however, requires that some individuals overcome these inclinations by getting involved in local government, in mutual assistance, in Putnam's bowling leagues, and in civic associations of all kinds—the essential elements of democratic society. Sadly, by the end of the last century, we had turned away from each other in so many ways, including, as Putnam wrote two years ago, having fewer family meals together, inviting friends over less often, and generally engaging less frequently in activities that involve other people.

Many factors have contributed to this decline, including the hours we spend watching television, mostly by ourselves, and the ways in which we've constructed our surroundings, especially in the suburbs. Over time our lives have changed: air conditioning keeps people inside, back porches have replaced front porches, enclosed yards have replaced open alleys, and with attached garages, many people go to and from work without ever coming into contact with their neighbors. Gated communities represent an extreme example of all these trends. Private malls have become our new town centers, providing space for people to shop, eat, and play with their children surrounded by others they are unlikely ever to meet. Prior generations of Americans had social ties to larger numbers of people, especially the "Greatest Generation" whose shared experiences of the Great Depression and the Second World War fostered a certain mutuality of purpose and understanding that expressed itself in higher rates of voting, group membership, and community service.

All this matters because individuals who look out only for themselves and their families lose the habits of democracy, which, especially at the local and state levels, require the participation and oversight of an active citizenry. Being involved in communal activities is also good for us as individuals. As Putnam found, such activities build trust and improve health; they promote social capital, but they also make better personal lives. When people engage in these activities less often, the country suffers at all levels.

Not surprisingly, what we have done best since September 11 is to respond in largely symbolic and individualistic ways to a national tragedy—we have written checks, perhaps donated blood, purchased flags, and watched relief telethons together but apart. Don't get me wrong. Our renewed faith in government and trust in each other is significant; polls haven't revealed anything like it in at least thirty years. But we are dangerously close to squandering the moment it offers to remake America into a more just nation—a nation willing and able not only to defend itself but also to make life more just for more Americans. What seems lost in the current debate is the notion that many Americans suffer quiet tragedies every day, tragedies about which our government is capable of doing something. We tolerate more extremes of wealth and poverty than any other Western, industrialized nation—and that is a tragedy too, albeit of a different nature than

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the one we suffered on September 11. When we are thinking so much about unity, it should be harder to accept such radical inequality.

Now is the time to discuss how best to rebuild our nation—not just the World Trade Center towers but our cities, our rural communities, and many of our suburbs, where too many Americans retreat in isolation. But this may be a fleeting moment, partly because Republicans are the wrong party to have in power during such historic times. They don't, as they have often reminded us, believe that the national government should address social issues—unless they involve abortion, prayer in school, or sex education. And Republicans commonly ignore additional linkages between government and public behavior.

We are, however, partly at war with ourselves when we speak about collective action and the public good rather than individual rights—and government can help bridge the gap within and among citizens by reinforcing positive, community-minded behavior. It can, for example, shift funds in directions that help move more Americans out of poverty by truly rewarding work. It can reduce the emphasis on material gain in our culture by supporting policies that help us build a sustainable future—combating terrorists and securing the homeland, certainly, but also encouraging responsible consumption and environmental policies. We know how to reduce our dependence on oil—tax gasoline at rates that reflect the damage caused by our overuse of it (as most Western nations do). Drilling in Alaska is a short-term and short-sighted response to a deeper problem, and it will teach new generations that it is okay to destroy natural resources for short-term gains. A true patriot would stand up for energy policies that don't damage the environment, that encourage Americans to use public transit rather than to purchase oversized cars and SUVs.

Bush is right to talk about volunteerism, but wrong to disdain policies the government could pursue to reinforce new feelings of solidarity. He seems intent on using our patriotism and national security concerns to justify unprecedented increases in defense spending and cuts in already tattered public assistance programs. He speaks of government's effectiveness as a warrior, but rejects the notion that government can accomplish more at home than homeland security. He believes we can take on the "axis of evil," but doesn't trust his own government to examine our bags at the airport. He wants Americans to value each other more than material goods. And yet we were practically told, in the wake of the attacks, that it was our patriotic duty to spend ourselves out of recession.

Bush could reward our new faith in government by releasing information about meetings between Enron executives and Vice President Dick Cheney. Bush, Cheney, and Republicans in Congress could have fought for an airline bailout package that would have provided real assistance to laid-off workers in addition to bolstering the airlines themselves. They could have fought for an economic stimulus package that didn't go out of its way to reward small Texas firms with relatively few employees. Repeated efforts to cut taxes for the wealthy demonstrate just where Republicans stand on the value of community. They suggest that many Americans in poverty or struggling to get by on low-wage jobs would perhaps be right to wave fewer flags. And after the fiscal responsibility of the Clinton years, Bush is leading us right into renewed deficits that will preclude meaningful social policy for years to come: this looks like the right's most effective assault on the welfare state since Reagan tripled our national debt years ago.

We do have duties to our nation that extend well beyond buying more Gap jeans, but our government must in turn take seriously its duties to us. Certainly, the primary responsibility of a state is to protect its citizens from violent attack, but it also falls to the government to protect citizens from the worst effects of our economic system—a system that renders too many people powerless to lead dignified lives. To expect or accept less in a free and relatively prosperous society is unpatriotic. Government officials who do otherwise are pulling us further apart rather than bringing us together. ●

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Cambodia and the Perils of Humanitarian Intervention

William Shawcross

Since September 11, no question has been more urgent for America and the West than how to combat terrorism. The danger of this dramatic and necessary change is, however, that it threatens to obscure the problem of humanitarian intervention—the need for it and its limits. This is no small matter, for even in these dangerous times, it remains crucial for America and the West to establish that in international affairs they care about more than just their own self interest.

The 1999 war in Kosovo was defined by British Prime Minister Tony Blair as the world's first humanitarian war. The war was followed by international intervention in East Timor—first by Australia and then by the United Nations—to end Indonesia's brutal twenty-four-year occupation of the island. At the end of the old millennium, the world seemed to be changing the way it thought about humanitarian intervention. On September 20, 1999, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan spoke to this subject in his address to the last UN General Assembly session of the twentieth century. He pointed out that the notion of state sovereignty, central to the concept of the United Nations, is being redefined by the forces of globalization and international cooperation. Individual rights, Annan went on to argue, were now seen as more important than in the past, and the international community was searching (at least rhetorically) for new ways to intervene effectively and to limit the impunity of dictators.

The reports that Annan commissioned at the end of the nineties on the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and the 1995 massacre of civilians at Srebrenica revealed in painful detail how very hard it is, for both organizational and political reasons, for the international community to respond with necessary speed to unfolding humanitarian disasters. The bottom line in both crises was that major governments did not want to do more. They did not keep their promises to protect people. Annan was correct in his assertion that when the international community promises to protect citizens, "It must be willing to back its promises with the necessary means. Otherwise it is surely better not to raise hopes in the first place." Others went even further in pointing up the perils of humanitarian intervention. Edward Luttwak argued that humanitarian intervention can be counterproductive and that the international imposition of cease-fires often ignores the underlying problems that led to war in the first place. In an essay in the July/August 1999 *Foreign Affairs* entitled "Give War A Chance," published at the time of the Kosovo War, Luttwak argued that sometimes only the evil of war can resolve a political conflict and bring about peace.

What is certainly true is that the history of interventions in the last decade shows how immensely difficult it is for the world to impose the solutions it seeks on recalcitrant regimes. Slobodan Milosevic ruled Serbia throughout the 1990s until NATO's intervention in Kosovo in 1999 led, with the help of the Serbian people, to the collapse of his regime, and he was finally turned over to the International Tribunal in The Hague to face trial for war crimes. Saddam Hussein, on the other hand, is still in power, and the Taliban were removed from power in Afghanistan only because the United States, after the atrocity of September 11, was willing to assault them with full military force. Before then, the chronic crisis in Afghanistan had been ignored by the international community for more than a decade. In his 1999 speech, Kofi Annan criticized this partial vision, which is often governed by something as capricious as the access of television cameras.

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He decried "our willingness to act in some areas of conflict, while limiting ourselves to humanitarian palliatives in many other crises whose daily toll of death and suffering ought to shame us into action."

THE ULTIMATE consequences of the humanitarian interventions that took place in the former Yugoslavia and East Timor are still unclear. In the short term, conditions for the vast majority of people in both crises have improved immeasurably, as have those of the people of Afghanistan with the fall of the Taliban. There is reason to hope that such improvements will be sustained. But if we want historical perspective on the long-term difficulties we face in these countries—and on how whatever happens in them is bound to reach beyond their borders—it is instructive to look at some aspects of the story of Cambodia over the last twenty years. What happened after Cambodia became a vast killing field?

It was clear from the moment the Khmer Rouge won victory in April 1975 that it was intent on creating a radical revolution of extraordinary brutality. But the outside world paid very little attention. The regime immediately drove the population of Phnom Penh into the countryside, expelled almost all foreigners, and closed off the country from the outside world. Its intention was to create an autarchic agrarian dictatorship. Over the next three and a half years, refugees were the main witnesses to what was occurring within, and they brought with them consistent stories of horror. They told of mass starvation and disease in the work camps created by the Khmer Rouge leaders and the systematic murder of people linked to the old regime, as well as those who questioned the wisdom of the revolution.

Before the Khmer Rouge victory, reports of its atrocious rule had filtered out of the areas it controlled. But few people listened. Even after April 1975, it took a long time for the world to accept the reality of the horror within Cambodia. Western intellectuals, many of whom had been opposed to the U.S. war effort in Indochina and tended to see Washington's enemies as courageous freedom fighters, were slow to accept that the refugees were telling the truth. Some even argued that their reports were CIA propaganda, designed to justify the claim that a communist victory would lead to a "bloodbath." But in March 1977, the French socialist and expert on Indochina Jean Lacouture denounced the Khmer Rouge for practicing what he called "auto genocide." Lacouture wrote, "After Auschwitz and the gulag, we might have thought this century had produced the ultimate in horror, but we are seeing the suicide of a people in the name of revolution—worse, in the name of socialism."

In 1978, the continued refugee tales of atrocities drove Senator George McGovern to ask, "Do we sit on the sidelines and watch a population slaughtered or do we marshal military force and put an end to it?" "One would think," he went on, "the international community would at least condemn the situation and move to stop what appears like genocide." McGovern was making serious points, but he was dismissed by both right and left.

At the end of 1978, Vietnam, for its own strategic reasons, invaded Cambodia to overthrow its former Khmer Rouge allies. For the Cambodian people this was a liberation; by then an estimated 1.7 million of Cambodia's seven million people had died from starvation, forced labor, and mass execution during the Khmer Rouge period. But Vietnam's intervention, which Hanoi declared was "irreversible," quickly became an occupation that lasted until the early nineties. Hanoi created a client regime largely out of defectors from the Khmer Rouge, including a young man named Hun Sen, who became the dominant figure in Phnom Penh. For more than ten years, this government ruled Cambodia, isolated from most of the world.

Even though the new regime ended mass killings and forced starvation, impunity remained complete. No effort was made to punish the authors of the genocide. The puppet Communist Party installed by Vietnam set up nationwide secret police structures and used systematic torture as one of its primary tools to combat Khmer Rouge guerrillas and other enemies of the regime. The director of the T3 prison, Sin Sen, infamous even in a closed regime for ordering the torture and deaths of real and perceived political opponents (not just Khmer Rouge), was rewarded for his work by

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a steady series of promotions, until he became the national chief of police. Throughout the eighties, Vietnam's dictatorship held on to power.

Loath to tolerate the notion that states may conquer weaker neighbors for any reason, the United Nations voted overwhelmingly not to recognize the Vietnamese-controlled regime in Phnom Penh. Instead, it ousted the representative of the old Khmer Rouge government and allowed a coalition that included the Khmer Rouge—and was led by Cambodia's former ruler, Prince Sihanouk—to hold Cambodia's UN seat.

Meanwhile up to half a million refugees fleeing first from the Khmer Rouge, then from the Vietnamese, and finally from famine, camped along the Thai-Cambodian border. Some of the camps were controlled by the Khmer Rouge, who were armed with Chinese weapons supplied through Thailand. Most of the refugees were in camps controlled by noncommunist groups, including the royalists led by Prince Sihanouk's son Prince Ranariddh. The most fortunate were in refugee camps just inside Thailand run by the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees.

The world's continued support for the remnants of the Khmer Rouge regime provided Vietnam and its supporters with an effective propaganda weapon. But in truth the autocratic and brutal regime they controlled in Cambodia showed little sign of seeking either the truth about the Khmer Rouge period or justice for its victims.

Throughout that period, humanitarian aid was the only intervention allowed by the Vietnamese and their client regime. Both in Phnom Penh and along the Thai-Cambodian border, food provision undoubtedly saved lives but, as it had done since the first great international humanitarian intervention in Biafra, it also fed and fueled the continuing war.

By 1983, the Cambodian relief effort was already one of the largest the world had ever mounted, certainly in terms of dollars spent per head of the population. In the Bangladesh crisis of 1971-1973, about thirteen hundred million dollars were spent on behalf of a population of seventy-five million. For Cambodia, close to a thousand million dollars were spent over three years on a population of seven million. Much of the money was ill spent, because the Western donors and agencies wanted to act as quickly as possible, without the necessary preparation, and because the Vietnamese imposed political rather than strictly humanitarian priorities on the aid program inside Cambodia. The same factors were at work in the camps along the border controlled by the Khmer Rouge, but fortunately most of the border refugee population was outside Khmer Rouge control. These were the Cambodians who benefited most from international concern. The relief agencies, despite their many failings, were at least able to educate children and teach skills to the adults in a way that was impossible under Vietnamese rule inside Cambodia.

ONLY THE COLLAPSE of the Soviet Union—Vietnam's principal patron—and the end of the cold war, ended Cambodia's limbo. As a result of efforts led by the Australian foreign minister, Gareth Evans, and Steven Solarz, a veteran member of the U.S. Congress, a plan was produced to bring Cambodia back into the international community. In October 1991, the Paris Peace Agreement created a virtual UN Trusteeship. The agreement was signed by the four main parties to the conflict: the Vietnamese client government in Phnom Penh under Prime Minister Hun Sen, two noncommunist opposition groups, and the Khmer Rouge. Including the Khmer Rouge, rather than attempting to put its leaders on trial, was distasteful to say the least, but it was essential for getting China, still the Khmer Rouge's principal sponsor, to agree to the peace process and to stop arming the Khmer Rouge. Many of those who argued for such a compromise believed, correctly, as it turned out, that the Khmer Rouge would wither once forced to come in from the cold. But in any case, they had few options. The alternative in the early nineties was a continuation of the war, no international recognition for Cambodia, and no chance for peace.

This is not the place to retell the story of the efforts of the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). It did have considerable successes, but it also created huge expectations that it was only partly able to fulfill. The UN

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was unable to take control of ministries in the government of Hun Sen as the Paris Agreement proposed. The Khmer Rouge withdrew from the process and then attacked it.

The Hun Sen regime also did everything it could to undermine the attempt to enforce democratic political and judicial norms. The national police chief, Sin Sen, created a network, known as the "A teams," which was responsible for the murder of political opponents in the run up to the 1993 elections sponsored by the UN. In spite of the presence of about 16,000 UN blue helmets and 3,600 CivPol (UN civilian police), more than a hundred opposition party members were killed by these forces. Members of the network have acknowledged the crimes to the American writer Brad Adams. But they maintain that they would have been killed themselves if they had not followed orders and that they had been brainwashed into believing their victims were actually Khmer Rouge operatives.

UNTAC officials gathered some information about the operations and personnel of these forces, but fearful that the Cambodian People's Party would withdraw from the elections if confronted directly, they made only token efforts to disrupt the network. For the most part the UN chose to work quietly behind the scenes, releasing only one report on political violence during its eighteen month tenure. When UNTAC demanded the resignation of one particularly brutal provincial governor, Ung Samy of Battambang province, Hun Sen said that if Ung Samy went, he would go too. The UN backed off.

In principle, UNTAC offered the best opportunity in modern Cambodian history to address the question of justice and begin to hold perpetrators accountable. Many Cambodians saw this development as one of the primary purposes of the UN "occupation"—even more important than the election, which became the centerpiece of what is better described as the UN's trusteeship. Nonetheless, the Cambodian courts, firmly under the control of Hun Sen's People's Party, steadfastly refused to investigate even the clumsiest political murder, and without the backing of most of its member states, UNTAC was reduced to belatedly setting up a special prosecutor's office that in the end ordered the arrest of only four alleged murderers, and was unable to bring even one of them to trial. One of the accused died in custody, and the other three were released after the UN left. Sin Sen later said that he was amused at watching the UN spin its wheels while his operatives continued their work.

Violence did not stop the well-managed elections held in May 1993. These elections returned a majority for the royalist party (FUNCINPEC) led by Prince Ranariddh against Hun Sen's People's Party. But Hun Sen and his communist cadre would not accept the result; they threatened war with the UN and the secession of the eastern half of the country if the UN tried to impose the choice the people had made. The UN had neither the mandate nor the muscle to challenge them. As a result UNTAC presided over the creation of an unhappy coalition between royalists and communists. Ranariddh and Hun Sen became co-prime ministers. But Hun Sen's Communists, with their entrenched organization, dominated the new regime until, eventually, they destroyed it and resumed sole power again. The new government urged the UN to leave quickly, and the vast army of men and women in their white cars departed in summer 1993. Only a new and important UN human rights office remained.

THE FIRST YEAR of the new regime was relatively free of gross human rights abuses. It even seemed at first that it might take action against those accused by the UN human rights investigators of political murders in Battambang. It did not. In 1994, the government enshrined impunity in the law by prohibiting government employees, including soldiers and police, from being charged or arrested without the permission of the relevant minister. Unsurprisingly, that permission was rarely given. Thus, while the prisons overflowed with ordinary citizens, the most dangerous and violent elements of society—soldiers and police—were virtually never prosecuted. Instead, Hun Sen built up a new security network. In 1994, he was able to wrestle the national police chief job away from party rivals and appoint his own man, someone with a reputation for brutality. Overt political violence returned,

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with the killing of three journalists, threats to members of opposition members of parliament, and a grenade attack on an opposition party—the Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party. This attack was even publicly announced in advance by Hun Sen, who said that if the party congress went ahead, grenades might be thrown at it. While pro forma denunciations were issued by some donor governments, little pressure was put on the new rulers in Phnom Penh to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The single worst case of impunity was the attack on a legal, peaceful political rally by the Khmer Nation Party led by Sam Rainsy, a popular former minister of finance who had been dismissed from the government in 1994 after organizing a campaign against official corruption. On March 30, 1997, Rainsy led a protest against the corruption and lack of independence of the Cambodian judiciary in a park across from the National Assembly. Four grenades were hurled into the middle of the crowd, killing sixteen and injuring more than a hundred. Rainsy was saved by his bodyguard, who acted as a human shield, dying in the process. Witnesses chased the grenade throwers toward the People's Party compound, but were stopped at gunpoint by Hun Sen's bodyguards.

The FBI was called in because an American was injured in what was considered a "terrorist attack." It quickly concluded that Hun Sen was the only person who could have given the order for the grenade attack. Virtually everyone in Cambodia saw this incident as an attempted assassination of the leader of the opposition—so as to send a message to Cambodians to avoid oppositional politics. Worried that the investigation was moving too close to Hun Sen and would further destabilize Cambodia, the U.S. ambassador ordered the FBI out of the country, and the investigation ground to a halt.

Many senior Cambodian officials, even in the People's Party, hoped that the FBI would publicly announce its findings, believing that this would force Hun Sen from power. But this did not happen. Although the identities of at least some of the perpetrators are known to the police, no one has been arrested. Hun Sen attempted to blame Sam Rainsy for the attack, suggesting he organized it to discredit the government.

Later that year Hun Sen staged a bloody coup d'état against Ranariddh, his co-prime minister. The UN human rights office confirmed more than ninety extra-judicial executions after the coup, most of them of senior members of FUNCINPEC's military organization; Ho Sok, FUNCINPEC's deputy minister of the interior, was murdered in the office of a police general on the day after the coup. The murder was not even investigated.

Since the UN left in 1993, the impunity of murderers, old and new, has become standard in Cambodia. The UN human rights office and the UN special representatives for human rights have each produced extensive reports on the subject of impunity and on individual cases. Local human rights organizations have also written extensive reports on the subject, taking great risks to document case after case of violence that has led neither to investigations nor prosecutions.

Even senior military and police officials admit to the problem and complain about it, although when specific cases are raised they often go into denial. Freedom from punishment extends, too, to lower levels of government. Everyone in Cambodia is familiar with drunken soldiers refusing to pay their bills at restaurants, or illegal military and police checkpoints where one must pay a bribe to pass, or ordinary citizens having to move out of a line when a man in uniform arrives. Everyone knows who these people are, but no one dares to touch them.

Something of the same attitude applies to the Khmer Rouge. They had been weakened by the UN intervention, but Hun Sen has since been more interested in embracing than prosecuting them. In August 1996, to the dismay of King Sihanouk, the government rushed through an amnesty for a Khmer Rouge leader, Ieng Sary—who was now a warlord controlling the gem mines on the Thai-Cambodian border—to detach him from the rump of the Khmer Rouge still controlled by Pol Pot. Amnesty International complained that "amnesties which have the effect of preventing the emergence of the truth and subsequent accountability before the law should not be ac-

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ceptable." The king agreed. As Amnesty International pointed out in its letter to the king, "Impunity is one of the main contributing factors to continuing cycles of human rights violations worldwide."

In 1997 Hun Sen requested an international tribunal to try the Khmer Rouge, but it is now clear that he did so only as part of a strategy for defeating them politically and strengthening his own hand. He was not interested in seeking justice for Cambodians or in trying to figure out, as Cambodians wanted, why the Khmer Rouge had killed so many of its own people. By the time the international Commission of Experts published its report in February 1999, Pol Pot was dead, the Khmer Rouge had collapsed, and Hun Sen had shared a champagne toast at his house with two of the most notorious Khmer Rouge leaders, Nuon Chea—"Brother Number Two"—and Khieu Samphan. They apparently negotiated their defection to the government in return for a promise that no charges would be brought against them. Both live in quiet liberty in the former Khmer Rouge stronghold of Pailin on the Thai-Cambodian border, receiving guests and traveling freely.

A FEW WEEKS after the Commission of Experts report was issued, the last senior Khmer Rouge holdout, Ta Mok, was handed over to Cambodia by the Thai Army, which decided finally to wash its hands of the Khmer Rouge problem. Mok has been held since at the military prison in Phnom Penh with Duch, the former chief interrogator at the Khmer Rouge's notorious Tuol Sleng prison. These two are the only people ever arrested for the crimes of the Khmer Rouge. Mok and Duch receive deluxe treatment: Mok is the only prisoner in Cambodia to have a private bathroom. Duch has air conditioning.

For Hun Sen, a former Khmer Rouge battalion commander himself, the Khmer Rouge problem had been solved. Trials for the Khmer Rouge were no longer politically useful, given the many deals he had struck with people like Ieng Sary, Nuon Chea, Khieu Samphan, and lower ranking Khmer Rouge commanders—and they could cause trouble with his new ally China, which vehemently opposed a tribunal, given its close ties to the Khmer Rouge while it was in power.

Instead, Hun Sen began to throw up obstacles to a tribunal at every opportunity. But when he announced to Cambodians that they should "bury the past," the public response was negative; even some elements of the Cambodian People's Party protested. Hun Sen then shifted gears, announcing his support for a Cambodian tribunal with international participation. Under intense pressure from the United States, which had been a staunch supporter of an international tribunal, the UN reluctantly agreed to a "mixed tribunal." In a February 2000 letter, Kofi Annan established four principles for its operation: The tribunal must, Annan argued, contain a majority of foreign judges in order to address the question of judicial independence, have an independent international prosecutor so as to ensure the power to indict, receive a commitment from the Cambodian government to arrest any person indicted by the tribunal, and agree that the amnesty granted to Ieng Sary would not be a bar to prosecution.

Hun Sen rejected these conditions. Instead, he demanded a domestic tribunal with the involvement of judges from friendly states willing to supply them. The Clinton administration, which appeared to want a tribunal at any cost, then announced its support for a complicated arrangement in which there would be a majority of Cambodian judges and no independent international prosecutor, but where a "super majority" of judges would be required for any acquittal and an appeals panel would be created to break any deadlocks between the Cambodian and international co-prosecutors.

This new arrangement was a dangerous precedent for international justice, but the UN accepted it. Still, this capitulation was not enough for Hun Sen. He imposed new conditions and raised new objections. He frequently raised the specter of renewed civil war if Ieng Sary or others were arrested and pushed through a law that conflicted with commitments he had made to the UN.

He then delayed final passage of the law creating the tribunal for almost a year and failed to respond to UN concerns over the operating

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agreement governing the relationship between the UN and the Cambodian government.

Senior UN officials became increasingly frustrated and concerned about Hun Sen's apparent lack of good faith and "lack of urgency" in concluding negotiations. In February 2002, the UN announced its withdrawal from the process. The UN said it had concluded that as currently envisaged the mixed tribunal "would not guarantee the independence, objectivity and impartiality that a court established with the support of the United Nations must have." The UN was particularly worried that Cambodia had refused to sign a legally binding agreement specifying the rules by which the UN would participate. Instead, Cambodia insisted that only its own rules would govern UN assistance. The delay in the creation of the tribunal allowed one of the most murderous Khmer Rouge leaders, Ke Pauk, member of the standing committee and the military commander perhaps most responsible for mass purges, to die in February of natural causes without having spent a day in jail. One by one, Khmer Rouge leaders are taking their secrets to their graves.

Astonishingly, several Western countries, including the United States, France, and Australia, responded to the UN's decision by criticizing the organization publicly and insisting that it continue negotiations. This apparently reflected the fact that these governments were less interested in credible or substantial justice than in staging a trial—any sort of trial—in order to close the book on the dark Cambodian past and to improve relations with the Hun Sen regime. The UN has resisted this pressure and has continued to insist that its decision is final. That is undoubtedly the correct decision in the circumstances.

Given Hun Sen's record, it seems unlikely that the UN and Cambodian governments will be able to reach an agreement for a tribunal that protects the sorts of judicial standards that the UN has tried to uphold in the war crimes tribunals in The Hague and Arusha. If no agreement is reached, then the Cambodian government will be in charge of any trials that do take place. In that case there is little prospect for anything more than a show trial of Mok and Duch.

It now seems probable that no judicial accounting of the Khmer Rouge period will take place. Even if the UN and Hun Sen had reached a satisfactory agreement, only a handful of people would have faced trial, whereas in both former Yugoslavia and Rwanda minor figures as well as major have been prosecuted. Many Cambodians still live in villages with their former tormentors and, with the exception of a spate of revenge killings in 1979, have waited patiently for the killers of their relatives to be brought to justice.

IN SHORT, the story of the world and Cambodia since the mid-1970s shows the immense difficulty that the international community has in intervening effectively to judge—much less to stop—massive abuses of human rights. Today the notion that there is a right or even a duty of humanitarian intervention is much more widely accepted than when Senator George McGovern first proposed it against the Khmer Rouge in the late 1970s. But it is still hard, verging on impossible, for the UN or other global bodies to make progress against the obduracy of autocrats, let alone of tyrants and mass murderers. The failure of the world to change the policies of Slobodan Milosevic, Saddam Hussein, Robert Mugabe, or Hun Sen without resorting to military force shows that, despite the end of the cold war, the advantage still lies with those who abuse rather than respect the law. ●

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A Drive to Globare

Kosovo after Milosevic

Kira Brunner

In the summer of 2000, I met Scott Slaten, an America soldier who had come to Pristina, Kosovo, two-and-a-half months earlier as part of a NATO-led peace keeping force (KFOR) providing security for the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). It was a little more than a year since the end of the seventy-eight-day air war that NATO launched on March 24, 1999, to stop Serbian ethnic cleansing. Slaten was sipping coffee in one of the many outdoor cafés where shopkeepers make a good living selling sodas and grilled cheese sandwiches to homesick internationals. We talked for a while in the shade of a Philip Morris umbrella. He agreed to find a jeep and take me the following morning to the village of Globare in central Kosovo. I wanted to find out how the process of building a durable peace was going in a country in which ethnic cleansing had taken such a toll. During the war, as many as ten thousand Kosovo Albanians, who account for more than 80 percent of Kosovo's two million inhabitants, were massacred. Eight hundred thousand more fled to neighboring Macedonia.

How do victims and perpetrators live side by side in a country shattered by "ethnic cleansing"? How does such a country rebuild its civil society and political structures? And what role should an intervening power like NATO play in the rebuilding process, especially if there is every reason to believe that new violence will begin if it pulls out?

Each day NATO troops become more entangled in the job of rebuilding the country, which, as a result of UN Resolution 1244, is officially a UN, not a NATO, protectorate. Today Pristina, the capital city, is swarming with human rights workers, KFOR soldiers, and United Nations officials. In addition, a handful of entrepreneurs have arrived, their presence announced by the sudden appearance of American-style gas stations just outside Pristina.

The next morning, my translator, Virtyt Gacaferi, and I met Slaten by his Jeep, a large white SUV with KFOR stamped on the side. Gacaferi worked as a journalist for *Koha Ditore*, the preeminent Albanian newspaper, and the only paper that kept its presses running throughout the war. A wiry and quick-witted twenty-year-old, he had a sophisticated understanding of the region, in comparison with what I was soon to hear from Slaten, who was full of gung-ho ideals and easy answers to the complexities of war and intervention.

We drove out of town, past checkpoints and NATO tanks, and entered the open farmland of central Kosovo. Gacaferi and Slaten began debating the country's future. Slaten was already fed up with what he described as the simple-minded, nineteenth-century nationalism of Yugoslavia's ethnic wars. He hated the way the ethnic hatreds that he encountered daily hampered the work of reconstruction. As an example, he pointed to the new Kosovo passenger train line that was under construction. "Both sides are against it," he said with undisguised sarcasm. "What if they started riding together? Oh my god, they might start living together, and what would happen then?"

Gacaferi, normally jovial and lighthearted, was offended. He responded patiently, not so much with a justification, but with a description of what daily life in Kosovo is like: "When an Albanian meets a Serb person for the first time, he thinks about 1912, then about World War I, then World War II, and then finally he thinks about the person standing in front of him." He was exaggerating only slightly. Even a train ride in Kosovo is never a simple matter. Every moment in the present carries with it

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the weight of repeated betrayals and grievances.

It is impossible to have any conversation about the political situation in Kosovo without getting a history lesson, but to understand the oppression that until recently shaped the daily lives of Kosovo Albanians, one doesn't have to go far back. In the late 1980s, the Serbian Parliament initiated a series of laws that steadily chipped away at Albanian rights in Kosovo. Starting in 1989, Belgrade passed measures that eroded the rights of Albanians in almost every sector of public and private life. The police force was purged, Albanians were replaced by Serbs. More than three thousand Albanian medical workers and journalists lost their jobs. Serbian managers took over radio stations, newspapers, and cultural institutions. And in a final blow, the government revamped the education system, replacing all Albanian language, geography, and history with a Serbian curriculum. As a result, few Albanians could remain in school. These legal mandates created an apartheid-like system, in which the Albanian majority—which had held public power until 1989—suddenly found itself subordinated to the Serb minority.

As far as the Serbs were concerned, their hold on Kosovo was historic, their ties to the land reaching back to 1389, when in a heroic struggle they were defeated by the Turks. Slobodan Milosevic, always the political mastermind, manipulated this sentiment for his own political gain. At a 1988 rally in Belgrade, he told an enthusiastic audience, "Every nation has a love which eternally warms its heart. For Serbia it is Kosovo. That is why Kosovo will remain in Serbia." Although tensions were high in the late 1980s, Serbs and Albanians would not come to blows over Kosovo for another ten years. The nonviolent tactics of Ibrahim Rugova, the man who dominated what amounted to a Kosovo Albanian parallel government, helped prevent the outbreak of violence. And Serbia, preoccupied with its war in Croatia and Bosnia, could not afford to spread its resources too thin.

Everything changed in 1998 when the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) transformed itself from a hit-and-run military offshoot of the Peoples Movement for the Liberation of Kosovo (LPK) into a viable army, committed to secession and independence and willing to battle Serbia as well as engage in terrorist campaigns of its own against Serb citizens. By July, the KLA had one-third of the country under its control, but in late July, after over-extending itself in a campaign against the town of Orahovac, its soldiers were on the defensive. Belgrade—no longer mired in a war in Bosnia—now decided to fix its "Kosovo problem" once and for all and launched a counter-offensive. Soon its paramilitaries poured into Kosovo, overrunning the countryside, slaughtering civilians, burning villages, and forcing Albanians to flee on foot into neighboring Macedonia.

As we drove through the countryside, we could still see destruction everywhere. Entire villages had been reduced to tangled scrap heaps of rubble. What was not destroyed had been carted away by scavengers. During the bad times, Gacaferi continued working as a journalist and remembers the exhilaration he felt when the American-led bombing campaign began in 1999. Like most Albanians, he saw the bombing campaign as the only way to prevent a mass slaughter. The first day the bombs fell, he stood on a rooftop in Pristina and cheered. "I never heard a single complaint against NATO, not once," he said. At this Slaten smiled approvingly. "America." he said, "is not a geographical location. It's an idea in our hearts and our heads that can be placed anywhere in the world. And the Albanians like this idea," he declared. Gacaferi politely said nothing. It was unclear whether or not he agreed with Slaten.

But I was growing increasingly skeptical. I wondered what might lie beneath the surface of such undaunted enthusiasm for all things American. In Pristina I had seen a portrait of Madeleine Albright taped to the window of a cigarette kiosk. Now, as we passed through villages where markets were once again bustling, I saw more KLA black eagles flying than stars and stripes. The flags were a clear sign of the loyalty people in the countryside still had to the KLA. Not surprisingly, the KLA credited its troops, not the Americans, with winning Kosovo's freedom from Serbia. Al-

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though they had agreed to disarm under the U.S.-negotiated terms, the daily retaliatory violence against Serbs still living in Kosovo attested to the fact that the KLA had not completely disbanded and was perhaps reluctant to grant NATO sole military power.

As we pulled into Globare, we attracted a great deal of attention. Children ran up to us, and three women walking up the road stopped to wave. Slaten jumped out of the jeep, greeted the children, pulled lollipops out of his pockets, and tossed them to the kids as they laughed and shouted, "America, America, thank you America." Slaten smiled and posed for photos with his arms wrapped around a group of kids. He clearly enjoyed acting like a World War Two liberation hero.

When I caught up with the three women on the road, I asked them where they had been during the war. They and their children had fled to the nearby hills when the Serb paramilitary forces raided the village. As they spoke, my eyes drifted over their shoulders to the field behind them where a large, freshly dug grave of seventeen or so plots had been heavily strewn with flowers. The women followed my eyes, waved their hands toward the graves, shrugged their shoulders in resignation, and said, "Our men."

One of the women invited us into her house for coffee. Slaten was eager to accept her invitation. He was having fun. "I never get to do this, I never get to meet civilians. This is the best part." Slaten cut a sympathetic but slightly ludicrous figure. Trained for battle, he was now reduced to handing out lollipops and posing for photos. The U.S. air strikes, designed to avoid American casualties, had made it impossible for ground troops to play a significant role during the war. With the air war over, the main duty of the KFOR troops was to find a way to prevent retaliation by Albanians against the Serbs. NATO troops patrolled Serbian neighborhoods on foot. They guarded monasteries from vandalism, stationing tanks in front of them around the clock. Beyond keeping a lid on the daily violence, the troops helped coordinate the rebuilding of decaying power plants, and repair sewer systems. Despite then-president Bill Clinton's declaration that U.S. troops would never become mired in nation-building, nation-building had, in fact, become a daily part of their duties.

For those who had lived through the war, it was clear why the wounds had not healed. As Slaten and I entered the woman's home, she described what she found when she returned from hiding. Her farm equipment was destroyed. Her house, although still standing, had been stripped of every piece of furniture. Even the plumbing was pulled out of the walls. In her living room, she pointed to the stucco wall on which Serb soldiers had engraved, with a knife, an image of a skull and crossbones, the Grim Reaper, and the words "Death Action," "Death Units," "Welcome to Hell." Whitewash barely covered the graffiti.

As we sat down to cups of strong Turkish coffee, a middle-aged man, clearly the head of the family, joined us. Excited by the presence of a KFOR soldier in his home, he began to seek reassurance from Slaten. He wanted to know if NATO planned to remain in Kosovo. He was very nervous about the possibility of the international troops leaving or of some deal being struck with Belgrade that might allow the return of Serbian control. "If the old system came back, I would take my family away," he announced. By the "old system" he not only meant Serbian rule and political repression, but also the return of death squads, killing, looting, and destruction. "If they could kill a seventy-year-old man," he said, referring to his father, who had been beaten to death in a nearby field, "how can we trust them anymore?" He looked pleadingly at Slaten, sizing him up. Could he put his trust in this man or not? "We don't trust the Serbs, but do you? Does NATO? Does the United States? Were you truly fighting for the cause of the Albanian people and the KLA? Do you expect us to live with Serbs again? And, will you leave us here to die if we refuse?" Slaten struck both his hands firmly on the table. "That won't ever happen. We won't allow the old system ever to come back." He flashed the man an open smile. Then, catching my eye, he turned and winked.

This question, asked by a victim and answered by a representative of the intervening power, captures the complexities of the post-

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war dilemma that Kosovo presents. To men like Slaten, the answers were simple. He had a job to do, and he was in Kosovo to get it done. But the Serbs who fled Kosovo during the American bombing left behind belongings and property. One day they will seek the return of their property. Then what? For Slaten, ethnic hatreds were just obstacles in the way of building a multi-ethnic state—the American ideal of democracy that can be "placed anywhere in the world."

Slaten is not alone in his hope of building an America in the Balkans. Even the turbo folk music pumping out of car radios and barrooms reveals the intertwining of Kosovo's own nationalism and an imported American patriotism. Aselina Ismaili, a popular turbo singer and Miss Kosovo 1997, wails to her mother on the radio of the beauties of Kosovo, from the patriotic battle in Drenica to the glory of the Albanian flag. "Mom, oh Mother, Drenica black and red, Mitrovica so beautiful and Pristina like our own little America."

Pristina is not America. It is a city struggling to co-exist with an occupying military power. And Kosovo is a country striving to rebuild its civil society and political structures. The actors in this theater of reconstruction are the no-nonsense NATO soldiers, the war-weary human rights workers who fly from one world catastrophe to another, and a generation of young Kosovo Albanians who, reared under Milosevic's rule, came of age during the war.

The story of this new generation of Albanians is a parable for the trials of Kosovo itself. As children they were torn from their classrooms by Serbian law, and as young adults they were tossed into the confusion of war. Today, they are struggling to find a place in the contemporary landscape of Kosovo. In the 1990s, laws passed by the Serb Parliament forced most Albanians to leave school. Although in the early nineties thirty-six thousand Albanian students finished primary school, the new law allowed only six thousand seats for non-Serbs in secondary school. In the university even stronger measures were taken; in 1993, the Albanian rector was fired and replaced by a Serb. The enormous difficulties that Albanian students faced in getting an education forced the establishment of a parallel education system. Teachers who had lost their jobs began to meet with students in private homes and garages. In 1998, the parallel system accommodated 266,413 primary school students, 58,700 secondary students, and 16,000 university students.

By 2001, the parallel schools, hospitals, and government created as a counter to the stifling laws of Milosevic's Serbia had collapsed. But the very fact that the parallel system existed attests to the ingenuity of a people who, during their darkest times, were able to exercise some control over their own political destiny. Today, they wish to rebuild those parallel structures, but this time with absolute control over them. Although the war was won, independence was not. Kosovo is still officially a part of Yugoslavia and is unable to create political institutions without Belgrade's approval.

Before the war, America rejected Kosovo's call for independence, fearing that it would lead to even greater turbulence in the Balkans. Now that this fear has dwindled, American foreign policy still objects to independence out of concern that it would look like a reward for the violent terrorist tactics undertaken by the KLA. For the moment, Kosovo has been declared a UN protectorate, thus deferring the tricky problem of independence. Under the UN protectorate, NATO has taken over the job of creating virtual institutions, laws, and structures that may with time become real. But right now Kosovo exists in a limbo between self-determination and dependence on foreign aid and oversight.

Human rights organizations, the military, and a collection of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) now have a hand in every aspect of governing the country. They help administer the gas works, electric power, garbage collection, and food distribution, and they conduct the sticky negotiations involved in returning property to Serbian refugees. Although life is manageable, and economic subsistence is feasible for most Kosovars, it comes with a price. The Kosovars are dependent on foreign aid, limited in the practical initiatives they can take on their own. Milk, for example, is priced as low as fifty cents a carton, because an NGO is selling it below cost. The result is that it has become less profitable for an Albanian farmer

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to open a dairy than to negotiate import fees with the NGO.

Young men like Gacaferi are prime examples of the entrepreneurial spirit that both takes advantage of and runs up against the new international forces in Kosovo. He profits from the influx of Western journalists, at times taking in as much as a hundred dollars a day as a translator. Yet he is skeptical of the instant success that Western attention and money bring. Reflecting on the hundreds of Westerners filling the streets of Pristina, he gripes, "Many of these guys who come under the pretext of humanitarianism are really just businessmen. They can make a hundred thousand dollars a year tax free. Retired U.S. police officers come to make money and see Europe. From here they can go to Turkey or Greece or Italy." True enough, but what also cannot be denied is that the intervening military force has brought stability to a region nearly destroyed by ethnic war. Gacaferi pauses and looks at an American officer sitting nearby and remembers that he prefers the new order to the old.

"Nobody likes police, but we can't live without them. Now we have, 'Please can you get out of the car.' Before we had, 'Get the fuck out of the car.'" It is a difference worth preserving, as Gacaferi knows. Yet, at times, the imposition of American rules and regulations on a Balkan culture seems so removed from reality that it can only be laughed at. New mandatory seat belt rules and radar speed checks result in a hundred dollar fine for any violator. The trouble is that the rules have no real weight in a country where the average monthly salary is less then fifty dollars.

THERE IS A JOKE in Kosovo that goes, "Why can't an elephant go to primary school? He can't fit through the door. Why can't an elephant go to secondary school? He didn't go to primary school. Why can't an elephant go to university? Because he is working for an NGO." The joke points up how complex the end game in Kosovo has become with NATO, the UN, and NGOs in effect running the country. The role NATO has undertaken in the name of human rights is not only necessary, it is invaluable. NATO has been able to keep a lid on violent retaliation against Serbs still living in the region, and it has also provided a buffer between Kosovo Albanians and Belgrade. Without NATO's presence, Kosovo could easily slip back into war. There was proof of this vulnerability last summer when many KLA soldiers, frustrated by the constraints in Kosovo, crossed the mountains into Macedonia and threatened the capital city of Skopje.

Yet, leaving Kosovo indeterminately as a protectorate too easily allows NATO and the United States to slip into the role of an imperial-like occupier—a role that in the end undermines the values of humanitarian intervention. The power a protectorate gives NATO and the United States is open to abuse that can only be avoided if Kosovo and its people are helped to succeed in the much more complex task of achieving self-government. ●

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Justice on a Hill

Genocide Trials in Rwanda

George Packer

On a ridge in southern Rwanda, a few miles from the Burundi border, lies the town of Butare. The National University is there, and for many years both the town and the province of the same name enjoyed a reputation for tolerance. In 1994, the proportion of Tutsis in Butare was far greater than anywhere else in Rwanda—there were 140,000 throughout the province—and in town Tutsis made up a full quarter of the population. The rate of intermarriage between Hutu and Tutsi was higher here than elsewhere, so high that Hutus in the north of Rwanda sometimes said that there were no real Hutus in Butare. In early April of 1994, when the rest of Rwanda was consumed with mass murder, Butare held out. Only after April 19, when the president of the interim government and other leading Hutu Power figures came to Butare and told its Hutu citizens to quit shirking their national duty, did the killings begin in earnest there. But once the genocide reached Butare, it accelerated at a frenzied pace, and by the end of April tens of thousands of Tutsis were dead. When the genocide was over, 75 percent of the province's Tutsis, more than a hundred thousand people, had been eliminated.

Laurien Ntezimana, a Hutu theologian who distinguished himself in Butare in 1994 by working to feed and save Tutsis, told me, "Butare is the most dangerous place in Rwanda." In fact, the province seems relatively peaceful today. What Ntezimana meant was that its history of interconnection, together with the scale of its slaughter, have left a pool of bitterness that is deep and toxic even by Rwandan standards. Eight years after the genocide, there is a great deal of talk about justice and reconciliation in Rwanda. I went to Butare because it seemed as tough a place as one could find to test the meaning of these words.

The road that winds south and west to Butare from Kigali, Rwanda's capital in the center of the country, passes through a stunning landscape. Behind every green hill there's another hill, with eucalyptus groves and banana trees and terraced fields of sweet potato and manioc and corn. The cottages nestled in the hills have terra-cotta tile roofs and little mullioned windows. Everything is on a miniature scale, hidden away, intensely settled, too much human imagination concentrated in too small a space ("the human head has many ideas," a genocide suspect in Kigali Central prison said). As I drove, the hills and the cottages looked like the landscape of a fairy tale on which there had been laid a curse.

In the northern part of the province, the paved road passes through the ancient royal capital of Nyanza, seat of the regional court of appeals. On my way to Butare I made a stop at the court, a two-story colonial building on a hilltop, because I wanted to talk to the prosecutor-general about *gacaca*. The word (pronounced ga-CHA-cha) literally refers to the flattened grass where, in Rwandan tradition, elders sit under a tree and render judgments on property disputes and cattle theft. Rwanda is now adapting this old and local form of trial to seek justice for the clearest case of genocide since the Holocaust.

Rwanda's prisons and lock-ups house close to 112,000 genocide suspects and another 5,000 convicts. The number is so great, and the condition of Rwanda's judiciary so poor, that it's often said it would take at least a century to try all the cases. The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which has had a monopoly on political power in Rwanda since it ended the genocide in 1994 by defeating the Hutu Power regime, has always claimed that the

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country's devastation, its continued lack of resources, and the enormity of the crime explain the excruciatingly slow turning of the wheels of justice. There is evidence, though, that manipulation by the RPF has delayed some trials, altered others, led to false arrests, and kept thousands of prisoners from even reading their files and knowing the charges against them. At the same time, untold numbers of *génocidaires* remain at large, both inside Rwanda and outside.

Faced with criticism abroad and a strain on resources and social relations at home, the RPF has launched a daring experiment in participatory justice based on the tradition of *gacaca*. Beginning this year, all but the most serious genocide cases will be tried outside the court system, by tribunals of elected judges in the communities where the crimes took place, with the local population in attendance as audience and potential witnesses for the prosecution or the defense.

The prosecutor-general of the Nyanza appeals court is responsible for preparing *gacaca* in his jurisdiction by arraigning prisoners whose files are empty—some of them have been locked up seven years without a court appearance—before the local populations. Jean Marie Mbarushimana, a large, self-assured man with a Gallic blue, double-breasted suit jacket and thick sideburns, is himself a survivor of the genocide. After four years in Canada he came home, as he said, "healed," to participate in the monumental task of bringing justice. He seemed undaunted as he smoked a cigarette by a large window that opened onto an airy second-floor porch where a pair of birds fluttered and swooped. He had no doubt about *gacaca*'s ultimate success. The genocide had been a collective effort, a national mobilization requiring everyone's involvement. *Gacaca* would untie the knot in the same way.

"The government wanted to incriminate the whole population," he said, "to cover up the genocide. So that it was almost impossible to be neutral, stay at home, remain outside it. You had to show you were for it. Because the orders came down—the orders—to be at the roadblock, to join the night patrols, and you had to take your stick and show you were part of it."

He was describing what it was like to be a Hutu in Rwanda in the spring of 1994. This effort involved a high degree of imagination and restraint on his part, but it is an effort that seems essential for *gacaca* to succeed. The point of taking the cases out of the courtroom and onto the hills is to create a setting where the fullest possible truth can be told. "Synergy" is how Laurien Ntezimana described it: "The two parties in conflict work together to bring light to the matter. They work together even when they contradict each other. *Gacaca* works in the heart of a family, on a hill, among people who have an interest in living together."

GENOCIDE IS an absolute. It doesn't admit of moral degrees. But more than anywhere else, in Rwanda, where tens or hundreds of thousands of ordinary people from one group joined in the attempted elimination of another group, genocide was made up of countless individual choices, deeds, omissions, evasions, rationalizations, compromises. What were they? At this distance we think about the Rwandan genocide as a singular horror, a truth reducible to two unbelievable figures: one hundred days, eight hundred thousand deaths. But for every Rwandan involved—and there was hardly a Rwandan who was not, in one way or another—the genocide meant the particulars of his or her own experience. Jean Marie Mbarushimana told me that he wanted to make a film about the genocide to show Rwandans how it happened everywhere in the country. I said that most foreigners *only* understood it as a whole; what we had more trouble understanding, and perhaps did not want to understand, was how it happened in this or that corner of Rwanda.

I was not interested in ideologues or sadists, though Rwanda has produced its share of both. They seem exhaustively examined and at the same time fundamentally unknowable. I wanted to find the ambiguous cases; I wanted to talk to Hutus whose conduct during the genocide would force you or me to ask what we might have done in their place.

The prosecutor-general put out his cigarette. On the way to his door I asked if there was a case in the Butare prison that I might find especially interesting in light of our con-

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versation. He thought about it. "There's a prisoner named Camille Nzabonimana. He used to sell solar-heating panels. He saved a lot of Tutsis, but he's accused of leading killers. Look into his case."

THERE IS A long history in Rwanda of mass action under state compulsion. During the time of the *mwami*, the precolonial Tutsi king, it took the form of regular communal work called *umuganda*. The Belgian colonizers exploited *umuganda* to conscript forced laborers in road-building and other public works, a practice continued after independence, especially by Juvénal Habyarimana, the Hutu dictator whose plane was brought down over Kigali on April 6, 1994 by a missile fired by attackers who remain unknown to this day. The genocide that followed his death—for which his death provided an excuse—was another variation on the theme of collective enterprise, an apocalyptic *umuganda*, the responsibility of everyone.

In a sense, *gacaca* follows in this Rwandan tradition of mass mobilization. The preamble to the *gacaca* law, passed on January 21, 2001 and disseminated in the name of President Paul Kagame, gives a strong whiff of command justice, declaring that the "duty to testify is a moral obligation, nobody having the right to get out of it for whatever reason it may be." The genocide was organized to incriminate everyone it didn't eliminate. *Gacaca* will make everyone who survived the genocide a defendant, a witness, or a judge. So *gacaca* presents a paradox, or rather, many paradoxes. It falls back on Rwandan traditions to resolve their terrible legacy—and yet nothing is more traditional in Rwanda than the idea that survival means figuring out what the authorities want. It depends on grassroots participation mandated by the state. It makes the assignment of individual responsibility for the genocide a collective business. It is premised on there being a community whose existence is open to serious doubt.

In October 2001, 90 percent of the population turned out in their local areas to choose the *gacaca* judges, known as "people of integrity." I arrived several weeks later, so I had to rely on Rwandans' accounts of how, for example, one man whose name was put forward by neighbors was rejected when someone else pointed out that he drank too much, or how a Tutsi recused himself because he admitted to harboring anti-Hutu bias. Across the country, 260,000 people of integrity were selected by their neighbors to make up the *gacaca* tribunals at all administrative levels. To me, this extremely public exercise in character analysis spoke of a degree of consensus and sheer nosiness that few American neighborhoods could achieve. But Rwandans seemed to accept the process as natural, and most people pronounced the elections a success.

Each tribunal has nineteen judges. Those at the cell level—a jurisdiction of about four hundred people—will collect accounts of crimes of genocide committed in their area, divide the suspects into four categories of severity (those in the first category, organizers and zealots of the genocide, as well as rapists, will not receive the benefit of *gacaca*), and go on to judge the Category 4 offenses, those against property. At the next level up, that of the sector, tribunals will hear Category 3 cases, involving crimes that resulted in injury. The district-level *gacaca* courts will hear Category 2 cases, involving killing but not leadership of killers (by some estimates, three-quarters of those in jail fall into this group). From each level an appeal can be made higher up, with provincial tribunals as the final courts of appeal.

The *gacaca* law allows for substantial reductions in sentences if the accused confesses. A Category 2 defendant, facing twenty-five years to life, can have his sentence reduced to twelve to twenty-five years if he confesses at trial; and if the confession comes before *gacaca* begins, the sentence drops down to seven to twelve years, which means that some killers who were arrested just after the genocide will be freed based on time already served. Others will benefit from doing community work in place of half or more of their remaining term.

Prospects like these have made *gacaca* a hard sell among genocide survivors. "A widow who sees the guy that killed her husband return to his own house and sleep with his wife?" speculated a woman who happened to be Hutu. "For her to think that they're making love right now, while I'm here alone? I imagine it

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could lead to killings, maybe by machete, maybe by poison." Some Rwandans assume that *gacaca* will liberate tens of thousands of killers; far likelier is a prisoner exchange, with some going free, others newly arrested after denunciations during *gacaca*, and the majority staying where they are to finish their sentences in prisons that will remain intolerably crowded. A proposed law of compensation payments has made *gacaca* more acceptable among survivors—but the law hasn't been enacted, and there's no money for it anyway. In the end, most of the survivors I talked to supported *gacaca* for their own well-being. As long as trials are delayed, they won't see justice.

Prisoners and their families have their own suspicions. In Gisovu, a remote prison high in the fogbound tea plantations of western Rwanda above Lake Kivu, one prisoner said he'd heard that all *gacaca* judges would be Tutsi. There was a rumor that all those who confessed would be trucked to Gitarama prison in the center of the country and killed. The confessed—most of them low-level participants—were receiving threats from influential prisoners and asked to be segregated. Others were warned not to confess because the coming Hutu war of liberation would release them soon. Thus far, the rate of confessions in the prisons is very low—in Butare, less than 10 percent—though the authorities believe that once *gacaca* begins and some prisoners go free after trial, the number will rise dramatically. Most of the prisoners at Gisovu, with little solid information and an ingrained suspicion of the Tutsi-dominated state, regarded *gacaca* as an opportunity that probably concealed a trick.

There is something in *gacaca* for everyone to dislike. Human rights groups point out the obvious procedural deficiencies: no defense counsel; prosecution, judge, and jury one and the same; low standards of evidence; ample room for manipulation and corruption. Psychologists warn of the potential for "retraumatization" as stories of killing and rape and torture are told in the most public possible forum. Somehow Rwanda's five thousand policemen are going to have to keep order at more than a hundred thousand trials where in many cases Tutsi survivors and Hutu defendants will look at each other for the first time since the spring of 1994. And yet I found literally no one, Rwandan or foreign, who was willing to oppose *gacaca*. No one had a better idea. Everyone seemed to understand that it is the only possible way out of the trap set by genocide.

In Rwanda, authority has always flowed from top to bottom. With *gacaca*, those in power are courting the possibility that the direction could be reversed, with unpredictable consequences. This is what makes the traditional idea revolutionary. "There are many things wrapped up in that one thing *gacaca*," said Peter Uvin, a scholar at Tufts University's Fletcher School who wrote a report on the subject for the Belgian government. "Politically, it's a brilliant piece of work. It offers something to all the groups—prisoners, survivors—it offers them all hope, and a reason to participate. It's brilliant." He pointed out that *gacaca* calls into question the idea of the RPF as an authoritarian government in a culture of obedience and fear. "Once they start, who knows when they'll stop talking? Hutus judging Hutus—it doesn't square with a government that needs to control everything. Intelligent thinking, a major political risk, and they take it. Is it really because they think it's going to amount to nothing? Are they that cynical? I don't know. Make up your mind and let me know."

BEFORE THE genocide, Seth-Robert Nzeyimana was a community development worker in the Methodist church—first in Kibuye, by Lake Kivu, where he was born, and then in a neighborhood of Kigali, where he was transferred in 1993. Léopold Rurangwa dealt with the mail and personnel files in the office of the mayor of one of Greater Kigali's districts. Each man was, in the words of Seth-Robert, "a good functionary," and as I listened to their stories on a bench outside Kigali Central prison, it didn't seem to make much difference that one was religious and the other civil.

At ten in the morning on April 8, a day and a half after the president's plane had gone down, Seth-Robert's neighbor came to his door. "He said they were killing Tutsis since Tutsis were complicit in the death of the president.

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He said I should join my neighbors on the road to Rebero. Everyone was obliged to go. When I went, I saw people taking Tutsis out of their houses and killing them with machetes, in plain view."

It started as the work of ten "fanatics of the president," local members of the *interahamwe*, the Hutu Power militia. But soon they had recruited a large crowd, including Seth-Robert, who left his house with a bread knife and an unsharpened spear.

"You couldn't say: Wait, I'll think about it and get back to you in a week. Even if you know killing is wrong—and everyone knows it—you couldn't let on that you were opposed. I had to look like the others. I told myself that my hand, my own hand, mustn't kill, mustn't shed blood."

I asked what he would have done if he had been ordered to kill.

"Maybe I would have—I couldn't know. Maybe I could have wounded someone. It's possible I'd have done it, I was so afraid of dying and my family dying. I'd only been married a year and there was still only tenderness in my heart."

Seth-Robert's involvement in the genocide, he said, amounted to joining groups of killers in his neighborhood between April 8 and April 12, when he and his family fled Kigali. He had never before seen someone die, but now he watched forty or fifty Tutsis being killed every day, and it struck him how many of them did not resist. "They just sat there calmly. They didn't try to flee—that's what I didn't really understand. Few cried, even the women. It was a courage that impressed me."

At night he returned home and tried to sleep a few hours. I asked if he discussed what was happening with his wife. He shook his head.

"We were frozen. We were cold. It was as if life had stopped. I said to myself: It's as if Rwanda is dying. Life had stopped. No ideas came to mind. It was as if we'd become prisoners in the country that now existed. I'd become like a piece of wood, if I can say."

Seth-Robert, who is forty-one, was wearing brown loafers and gray socks below his pink prison shorts. He told his story in a soft, calm voice, the voice of a good functionary of the church, with a long, mournful face, and at the hardest questions he smiled in a gentle sort of pain and paused a moment with his head tilted at a reflective angle before answering. Several times during the two hours of our conversation he excused himself, stood up, and turned his back. The first time he did this I thought he was weeping, until he pulled a handkerchief from his pocket and carefully but loudly blew his nose.

LÉOPOLD, THIRTY-FIVE, the mayor's assistant, had a high furrowed brow, pursed lips, and a blue-capped pen in his prison shirt pocket. By his own account, he had joined a mob that killed a man suspected of spying for the RPF. Léopold said that he delivered blows with the flat of his machete, intending only to extract information. "But unfortunately, my colleagues hit him without control, and he died. I went to inform the mayor, and then went home. The mayor said there was nothing to do, he had to be buried."

As Seth-Robert and Léopold described it, their overriding emotion in those days was fear. I heard this again and again from prisoners. The more Tutsis were killed, the more Hutus became afraid: of those doing the killing, those ordering it, and those—the soldiers of the RPF who were advancing throughout Rwanda—who might avenge it. They knew that not all their Tutsi neighbors could be RPF infiltrators, yet as the genocide proceeded apace and the propaganda machinery played on and the bodies piled up, they began to believe it. "Between Hutu and Tutsi there was this suspicion," Léopold said. "If a Hutu met a Tutsi, he thought he'd be killed. And vice-versa." Vice-versa was how it always seemed to turn out, yet in Seth-Robert's and Léopold's telling, they had been swept up in a fearsome catastrophe no less than their Tutsi neighbors. It was something that happened to them, not something they did.

Seth-Robert sounded happy only once during the conversation—when he recounted how, after he'd made it across Rwanda's killing fields back to Kibuye, he managed to save the Methodist mission's hospital equipment and musical instruments from looters. His satisfaction at this exceeded any pleasure he seemed to feel

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at the rescue of Tutsis by other Hutus that he sometimes mentioned—for he himself rescued no one, though a Tutsi hid in his yard without his knowledge. "Even if someone came to ask me to hide him, it would be useless, they'd come search the house and find him. I'd advise him to pass through the bush and either try to join the RPF or else leave the country."

When it was time for them to go back inside the walls, I asked Seth-Robert if he felt any guilt. There had been none in his telling; there wasn't really even sorrow. I was troubled by their absence, for he and Léopold seemed like decent men.

Seth-Robert smiled and nodded slightly, as if he'd been preparing for this question. Suddenly I felt like a confessor priest.

"After much reflection, I've told myself this: apropos of what happened, I felt myself guilty of cowardice. That's what I can tell you. I was cowardly in those first days of the massacres, and that's why I decided to plead guilty." I asked what he meant. "Cowardly because I didn't make a decision right away, before the situation got more serious. I could, for example, the day after the plane went down, I could have fled with my family without bringing any belongings. The love of material things made me wait. There, that's cowardice."

We said good-bye before I could bring myself to ask whether the love of material things was worse than the death of Tutsis.

In Rwanda I spoke with many prisoners who have confessed. They felt, or allowed themselves to feel, different degrees of remorse. But it always had to be drawn out of them with persistent prompting, and it always stopped well short of horror. A thirty-two-year-old technical school instructor named Bertin Bagaragaza sat with me in the dim little library of Butare prison, clutching a ruler, his right eye drooped shut. In June 1994, as the RPF advanced on Butare, Bertin had attended a meeting at which the mayor, a zealous administrator of the genocide in his district, discussed how to parcel out the goods left behind by the Tutsis who had been exterminated.

"My sin was this," said Bertin, holding the ruler upright like a scepter. "At the meeting I said this: As long as there are still Tutsis in families, and there are Hutus who hide them, we can't easily fight the war. So we have to hunt them, and we have to punish those who hide them. So that's my sin. That's the first sin I committed. The words I said could have had an influence on the hunt in the hills." He had also looted a washbasin, five packets of Omo detergent, and some bicycle parts.

I asked whether the Tutsis in the hills weren't hiding to save their lives.

"Normally, they hid to save their lives," he agreed. "But with the war that was in the country, I was afraid that the presence of the Tutsis in the country, with the army of the *Inkotanyi* [an old battlefield term applied to the RPF] could hurt us afterward." He paused. "That's what I feared." He looked at me with his left eye. "Me, that's what I thought."

How did he become convinced that he had been wrong?

"What convinced me—inside myself, I thought—an idea came to me. A simple peasant doesn't prepare hatred for another, or participate with the military. He doesn't mix in what doesn't concern him. I keep returning to the situation that was there before the war. If we look back at how we lived together before the war, there was no reason to hunt them. And then the idea of confession came to me—with reflection. Of what happened in life—that I'd done badly. That I'd behaved badly. I felt guilty."

After listening to Bertin, I left the Butare prison and went into town to meet Laurien Ntezimana, the lay religious leader who fed and protected Tutsis during the genocide. We sat at a table outside the Hotel Ibis, where *interahamwe* leaders had installed themselves when the genocide started here. I told Ntezimana that the confessed prisoners did not seem to grasp what had been done in 1994. They believed that the genocide was a spontaneous expression of popular anger upon the death of the president, rather than the meticulously planned and brilliantly administered conspiracy that it had been. They seemed to regard their own fear and peril as equal to the Tutsis'. In most cases, confession seemed more a matter of sentence reduction than tormented conscience. They had pleaded guilty to genocide, but they didn't tremble at the word.

"The person hasn't realized what he's done,"

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Ntezimana said, and his eyes and teeth flashed with a ferocity that seemed incongruous for a white-haired theologian, but made sense in light of his record. Goodness alone might not have been enough. "That's the work of religious confessors, and they aren't doing it. This is where it's necessary to go past religion into spirituality. Priests cut short the process, saying directly, You're damned, you're pardoned. You have to make the person understand who he was at the time and ask him if he's still that person, and whether he wants to follow another path."

I thought of the words on a sign outside the Catholic church of Nyamata, south of Kigali, in which ten thousand people were slaughtered, and which has become one of Rwanda's many genocide memorials: "If you knew who I was and who you were, you would not have killed me."

One hears various theories about why so many Rwandans didn't know who they were: A culture of obedience; the historical inequality between Tutsi and Hutu that was fatally manipulated by the Belgians; the violence and impunity of Hutu rule; land pressure in Africa's most densely populated country; the origin myths, the dehumanizing propaganda—Tutsis were called *inyenzi*, cockroaches; the logic of kill or be killed. Simon Gasabirege, a social psychologist at the National University in Butare, believes that Rwandans suffer from a weak and disorganized *personalité de base*. Christianity replaced traditional values but never penetrated far or took root; its message was told but not lived, Gasabirege contends. "The personality that everyone shares, the infrastructure of the community that holds it together, more or less strong, more or less weak—when you have a situation like this where you had such disorganization, then you have terrible damage. With these gaps in identity, violence comes out very strong. So for the survivors, it seems as if their neighbors changed overnight. Before, they were fine."

Indeed, survivors often spoke in such terms. The wife of an episcopal bishop in Butare said, "At the moment of the genocide there was a brusque change, people became animals and killed, but before there was no wickedness." A Tutsi woman in a rural area west of Kigali, who seemed to be the only survivor in her village, said, "Before the war, we were fine. If someone needed water or firewood, we shared. And we're that way again. But man can change in a moment." A teenage boy who was twelve during the genocide said, "I only knew I was a Tutsi because they killed my parents." And Hutus insisted even more vehemently on the friendly relations they'd always enjoyed with their Tutsi neighbors.

"Ah ah ah—that's false, that's false, that's *false*," said Jean de Dieu Mucyo, Rwanda's minister of justice. If you had a longer memory and looked below the surface, he said, mobilization for genocide began in 1959. It was carried on at home, at school, in public life. Rwandans, who seemed to become different people overnight on April 6, 1994, had been prepared to kill for years.

Mucyo is so youthful and his smile so shy that when I was shown into his office at the ministry, where he was working on a Saturday morning (the RPF is nothing if not purposeful), I glanced beyond him for an instant to find the minister. He comes from Butare; I'd heard that thirty-two members of his family were killed during the genocide. A sergeant in the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) during the war, he rose quickly to the highest level of the regime, where he presides over the genocide trials and is the most public RPF voice on *gacaca*. It's a fairly hard-line voice, though with me Mucyo spoke so softly that at times he was barely audible, and he sat quite still, as if—this, too, was a recurring quality of those in authority—the effort of self-restraint was very nearly immobilizing.

I raised the question of ambiguous cases—a prisoner, for example, who had protected some Tutsis and killed others, perhaps even killed in order to be able to protect—and how *gacaca* would deal with them. Mucyo brushed it aside. "Ask him why are there people who protected and didn't kill?" I pressed a bit: in effect, the *gacaca* law only covers crimes committed in the name of Hutu Power. Members of the RPA are thought to have killed thousands of civilians during and after the war, but these crimes won't go to *gacaca*, which at the very

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least raises questions about the government's own willingness to be held accountable.

The topic is an explosive one in Kigali, but Mucyo kept his cool. "We've explained many times that these cases should go to court." It was true: Kagame and others in the RPF have often argued that the genocide was a crime of the state, while the RPA killings were individual excesses. I told Mucyo that I accepted this distinction, but for a Hutu widow on a hill it might not matter; that she might look at a Tutsi widow at *gacaca* and feel there was a double standard of justice; that, for *gacaca* to work, the Hutu widow would need to be able at least to speak of her own loss. Why else should she agree to participate?

"If it's to speak, there are always meetings on the hills where she can speak. *Gacaca* is for justice." Mucyo said softly, "You had to be here in '94 to know. Trucks and trucks carrying corpses. *Interahamwe* shouting. You had to be here in '94."

For the justice minister, *gacaca* will separate the genocide's guilty from the innocent, and the nuances in these categories don't matter. For him, the truth is a simple thing; the only question is whether the people have the courage to speak it.

How one sees *gacaca* depends in part on how one sees the genocide. The *gacaca* law states that the genocide was "publicly committed before the very eyes of the population, which thus must recount the facts, disclose the truth and participate." Broadly speaking this is true—but both genocide and *gacaca* are composed of thousands of separate pieces that have to be assembled into a whole, like the film the Nyanza appeals court prosecutor wants to make to show Rwandans the extent of what happened. "No one was present at the genocide," said Thomas Kamilindi, a radio journalist who was nearly executed twice. "Everyone knows only his corner of it." The deeper you look into the details of one corner, the more nuances begin to disturb the law's clarity. "There is no such thing as one truth," said a Westerner involved in preparing for *gacaca*. "It's even more the case with genocide and especially this genocide, where the persons who committed the genocide are members of the same population as the victims of the genocide. Lots of people didn't want to see lots of things. Perhaps you would have done as I would have done, which is to spend as much time as possible in my fucking house. The survivors saw it at night or when their protectors were marching them from one place to another. Others participated, but at different levels. Can you imagine the kind of shumble rumble fucked-up panicky situation you would be living in this country, and then six or seven years later pile up testimonies about what happened?"

Then there is the larger truth of circumstances and motives—those cases where the facts are clear and the witnesses prepared to give accounts, but the actions of the guilty demand a deeper understanding. A Hutu girl protects a neighboring Tutsi family, and only the father of the family is killed. After the genocide, the family adopts her. Several years go by, and finally she can't stand it any more and confesses to them that she betrayed the father to his killers. She goes on living with the family, but nothing can be the same again. Joseph Kanyabashi, the mayor of Butare, spends the first days of the genocide guaranteeing safety to Tutsis displaced from other areas. At several meetings in mid-April, he urges collective resistance against attacks. Then the Hutu Power authorities descend on Butare on April 19 to demand cooperation, and Kanyabashi, who has a Tutsi wife and has been criticized for his friendships with Tutsis, stands before the assembly and pledges his support to the regime. Yet later that afternoon, he reportedly tells a crowded meeting at a sector office not to give in to the killings, although he cannot say how this can be done. Then he stops resisting. When his sister-in-law asks him to rescue her and her children from a besieged church, he sends word that he can do nothing. Soon he is ordering the destruction of Tutsi houses and issuing firearms to civilian "self-defense" groups; but when young thugs use them for plunder and indiscriminate killing he tries to toughen the regulations. In June, as the RPF moves toward Butare, Kanyabashi manages to save some of the last surviving Tutsis before fleeing to Zaire. He is later arrested in Belgium and this spring will go on trial at the

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international tribunal in Arusha, Tanzania.

Kanyabashi was neither the best nor the worst of the men in his position. He wanted to keep the genocide from reaching his district, but he was too cowardly or too attached to his job or too used to following authority to put up resistance when it did. Then he began his slide down the slippery slope. Alison des Forges, a leading American expert on Rwanda who will testify against Kanyabashi at Arusha, repeated to me what she was told by a Tutsi: "The only people who should be allowed to judge are we the survivors, because we're the ones who know the kind of pressure they were under." Des Forges challenged the notion of a terminally compliant population. "The capacity to reach down to every individual doesn't mean there is blind obedience on the part of every individual. People look for ways to evade the state. During the genocide, reactions varied. People had ways of avoiding the order—it was the same with road building." A Hutu student in Butare told me that it was possible to avoid participating—he jumped out a back window every time *interahamwe* knocked on his door—but it took courage, and it helped if, like him, you weren't well-known in town.

The possibilities of evasion put an added burden of guilt on those who wouldn't make use of them. But if, as Laurien Ntezimana said, *gacaca* only works "with people who have an interest in living together," then it will have to present the full context of each prisoner's response to the madness swirling around him.

Camille Nzabonimana received me inside the walls of Butare prison as if I had come to interview him in his living room. We sat opposite each other at a table outside the prison director's office, Camille with his hands folded together, a wedding ring on one finger, smiling in polite expectation, as if to put me at ease. At forty-eight, he was balding, with a small beard and a mole under his left eye. Only the brown discoloring of his upper teeth suggested that he had spent the past seven years in prison.

In a rich smooth voice, Camille told me the story of his life. He studied physics at Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow in the seventies, and in 1983 he received training in alternative energy in Florida. He married and had three children with the daughter of a man who had held a rare political place as a Tutsi member of the Hutu political party that assumed power at independence. His father-in-law's example convinced him to stay out of politics, and he never joined any party. Instead, in 1987 he left his research job at the National University and opened a shop selling solar panels, mostly for the rural villas of wealthy Rwandans. It was so profitable that in 1993 he started to build a hotel near Butare, which remains unfinished.

When the killings started in Kigali, his wife's relatives fled to Butare, which was still calm, and Camille hid them in his house behind the shop. On April 20, at 4 p.m., they heard the noise of a large plane—a C-130—and assumed it was the Presidential Guards. In fact, the plane had come from Nairobi to evacuate European nuns and United Nations observers; the Presidential Guards had already arrived by bus the same day. "And the killings started. We can never know how. I was in the middle of town—I heard gunshots. I knew it was bad, and from the twenty-second to the twenty-fifth we stayed inside—my brother-in-law, his whole family, five people, and my family. A Tutsi neighbor who lost his family ran to us and said, 'They killed my parents.' I said, 'OK, you can stay with us.'"

"So casually?" I asked.

"I didn't know the scale of the killings. With the earlier troubles, you could hide a Tutsi without being killed yourself. I didn't know the scale."

He had shown courage, but he wanted to be honest about the extent of it: if he had known more, he might have shown less. But now he had a problem, for there were seven Tutsis hidden in his house, including his wife (by the rules of Rwandan identity politics, his children were Hutus like him). At 9 a.m. on the twenty-second, while Camille was still in his pajamas, *interahamwe* wearing the red and yellow headbands of Hutu Power beat on his door. They were young and violent, and they entered by force, demanding to see identity cards. "I had a very quick reaction, knowing my wife had a Tutsi card. Her older sister was there with her husband, who had imagined this

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problem long in advance and changed their cards to Hutu. So he and my wife's sister now had Hutu cards, though they were Tutsi. I told my wife, 'Hide your card, say you've lost it,' and she threw it under the bed."

But one of the militiamen insisted that his wife, Jeanne Chantal, was a Tutsi. Thinking ever faster for her life, Camille said, "No, it's not possible," and he gave two reasons: her sister's card said "Hutu," and her father had been a big man with the Hutu party of independence. "It was a more or less consistent argument." Finally he offered to go for a replacement card with two militiamen to the mayor. This was Joseph Kanyabashi, who three days earlier had publicly committed himself to the genocidal regime. "But he knew me well and respected me a lot."

On the way, Camille and the militiamen became separated in the confusion of the town. Camille continued alone to the mayor's house, but Kanyabashi was out. "I couldn't go home, they'd demand the card. I got a friend in town to call a lieutenant, a friend of mine, and I explained very rapidly. I didn't say whether or not my wife was a Tutsi, just that they were going to kill her. The lieutenant went with another soldier and dispersed the group at my house, saying, 'What are you doing? There are no Tutsis here.' The *interahamwe* had knives and machetes, but the soldiers had guns and threatened to shoot them."

Camille eventually reached the mayor by phone, and within three days Kanyabashi, now fully involved in rounding up Tutsis, issued a Hutu identity card for Jeanne Chantal. "That was the first episode, for my wife."

"Around the twenty-seventh of April I had a notion to go see my mother-in-law in her village. Part of the house was destroyed and no one was there. I asked the neighbors what happened." A neighbor said my mother-in-law had been killed the day before, a brother-in-law the day I arrived. And they told us that the daughters had gone to hide in the sorghum field—it was the season when it grew high." Two nights later, taking advantage of a heavy rain that had cleared the militias from the roadblocks that were now up all over Butare, Camille drove with the lieutenant friend in a military vehicle and found ten people hiding in the field—"boys, girls, some from Kigali, distant relatives, even Tutsis from the area who had no relation to us." It took three days, but eventually they all joined the people he was already hiding in his house. By this time Camille had more than fifteen Tutsis with him.

"There were more threats. I didn't know how long the killings would last. I remained in a psychosis of fear, the whole time until July." Camille alone ventured out to the market for rice and potatoes; he even opened his shop a few times. Twice the *interahamwe* came back to his house, and both times the lieutenant's vehicle was parked outside. "They concluded that I was always guarded, so they didn't come back. A great bit of luck. So I was saved this way."

Two months after the RPF takeover, soldiers came to his house one night and brought him in for questioning. "They took me directly to this prison. And I remain here until today."

I had forgotten where Camille's story was leading. He sat before me in prison pink, still smiling but with a trace of irony. A bakery owner in Butare had accused him of joining killers in a church massacre in which the man's son had died. "You see how in business people are jealous." Over the years new accusations were made by other people whom the bakery owner put up to it, Camille said, while old ones were withdrawn, though he couldn't be sure of the details, for he wasn't permitted to see his own file. "It's a deduction from the questions they asked me that I know what's in the file. 'Your vehicle participated in massacres.' 'Which vehicle do you mean? The luxury SUV or the Mitsubishi?' In the file it said the Mitsubishi. I said, 'OK, the Mitsubishi wasn't in the country, it was in Burundi, I rented it to Doctors Without Borders.' Then they said it was the SUV that was with the *interahamwe*. If it wasn't one vehicle it was the other."

Letters written by the Tutsis he'd saved had no effect. Jeanne Chantal, who had lost many family members in the genocide, fell into a deep depression and left Rwanda with the children for France. Camille's case didn't move.

"And you did nothing?" I asked.

"Frankly, I'm guilty of nothing."

When Camille said this, he scrunched up his forehead and frowned, shaking his head.

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There was something mechanical about the expression, and for the first time I had a doubt about him.

I left him and went back into town to find his accusers.

Margueritte Mukabazanira, a secretary at the school superintendent's office, was at home when I came by. She appeared to be in her fifties, with wire-rim glasses, an African print dress and matching head wrap, and a muted air. When I mentioned Camille, she exchanged a smile with the two teenage girls in the living room with her. "I can't talk about it. For personal reasons." Nonetheless, she invited me to stay for lunch.

We ate beef and potatoes while the television blared a French program about seahorses. On the wall was a photograph of Fred Rwigyema, the first leader of the RPF, and a wedding picture of Margueritte and her husband. I tried to find a subject other than Camille, hoping we would return to him.

"Did you cook the lunch yourself?"

"No, there's a maid. But I know how to cook."

"Of course," I said, gesturing to the two girls, "you're the mother of children."

"No," she said quickly, "they killed them all. And my husband."

I put down my fork. "How many did you have?"

"Five. It's too long a story, I can't tell it. This is why it traumatizes me when people come here asking questions. No one ever comes to ask how we live, only to ask questions about these *interahamwe*."

I fell silent and stopped eating, but she insisted that I continue. She wondered how I liked the country. I offered that the landscape was lovely.

"Yes, it's a nice country except that they kill so many people here. It's very nice except for that."

Margueritte's face and voice remained dull. A Rwandan psychiatrist once told me that a long-term disorder not found in the *Diagnostic Statistical Manual* had appeared among genocide survivors. He called it "traumatic grief." "To grieve for one person is easy," the psychiatrist said. "When it's ten or twenty and you don't have any social support, then it's horrible."

The two girls were also survivors, from Gikongoro. They visited once a month because they too had lost everyone and they had taken Margueritte as their mother.

Lunch was over. "You want to free Camille?" she asked.

"I want to know what he did. I heard he saved a lot of people."

"Of course, they all say that," she scoffed. "At *gacaca* I'll tell everything. But now, even if I know a lot of things, I won't say."

Nonetheless, she was willing to help me find the bakery owner. His name was Martin Uwariraye, and we tracked him down at his surviving children's school. Martin was a heavy-set man who laughed nervously when I mentioned Camille. He seemed not to speak French, and Margueritte addressed him at length in Kinyarwanda. His answer was brief.

"He knows nothing," she said.

Martin gave me his hand and a smile; he was trying to leave. I held onto his hand.

"Is Camille guilty, Monsieur Martin? Is he guilty?"

Margueritte answered for him. "Is there a Hutu who isn't guilty?"

"You can understand how a woman in her position, who's alone, who lost all her children, how she might think that all Hutus killed," Innocent Kayitare told me that night, in the small office next to the bar he owned. Margueritte had given me his name as a possible witness against Camille, but Innocent had spent the whole genocide in a friend's ceiling—where he lost seventy pounds, while his protector went out every day to kill—and he had witnessed nothing. On the wall above his desk was a picture of his murdered five-year-old son. Innocent had the slightly incredulous manner of a man who was still trying to get his bearings, a man who's had his peace permanently disturbed and doesn't want to be caught off guard again. He was not hopeful about *gacaca* bringing Hutu-Tutsi reconciliation in Butare. "Those people drinking in my bar—there are Hutus and Tutsis drinking together. They won't say it, but if the government told the Tutsis that they were free to kill the Hutus, they'd do it." He added, "Living to-

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gether doesn't mean we have to love Hutus. It means we don't threaten each other. But we don't have to love each other." As for Camille, Innocent was certain of his guilt. "He lived very close to the roadblock."

It was true: Camille's old shop, and the house behind it, stood almost directly across from where the most notorious roadblock in Butare had been set up. On the other side of the main street there was a plot of overgrown grass that in 1994 had been the house of the local organizers of the genocide—the minister of gender and social affairs and her son, an extremely violent militia leader, both now on trial at Arusha. On my last day in Butare, I stood a hundred feet up the main road from Camille's shop and saw for the first time how close to the killers he and those hidden with him had been. My companion, a young human rights worker, was describing how a group of prominent survivors in Butare, including Martin Uwariraye, used their connections with the local prosecutor and the justice minister to keep wealthy Hutus like Camille in prison. The prisoners' goods were sold off and the profits contributed to a survivors' fund that supported women like Margueritte Mukabazanira.

"Do you think Camille is innocent?" I asked.

My companion stared down the road, as if he was seeing April 1994 again. "He must have had some relations with the roadblock," he said, avoiding the terms innocence and guilt. Camille had to have paid the militia, or given beer, or loaned his vehicle. Otherwise, they would never have allowed someone as well known as he to hide so many people so close to the roadblock and the house of leading *génocidaires*.

Much later, back in New York, I learned that Camille's name appears on a list of contributors to the war effort against the RPF, in his case more than five hundred dollars—though many were forced to give. There was more: at a town meeting on the night of April 26, he was named a leader of a security patrol in his neighborhood. Looking through my notes from our interview, I realized that his narrative jumped from the twenty-fifth to the twenty-seventh. Placing a leading businessman on a patrol would have given the administration of genocide in Camille's corner of it more legitimacy. But the minutes of the same meeting show that the need to "cut the brush" around town was also discussed, to deny the cockroaches their hiding places. The next day Camille had his notion to drive out and look for his wife's family in the sorghum fields.

Is he a *génocidaire*? Perhaps it will all come out when he, and the Tutsis he saved, and Margueritte Mukabazanira and Martin Uwariraye, and others, face one another at *gacaca*.

IT TROUBLED ME to think too much about the dilemmas of Hutus like Camille. After all, there was nothing ambiguous about the mass graves at Gisozi, a hillside overlooking the main ridge across which Kigali spreads out. A new memorial is being built on a site where bones collected around the city were buried in 2000. Gisozi will be Rwanda's Yad Vashem. My guide was Evode Kazasomako, a psychologist who now holds office in the municipal government and oversees the project. He took me through concrete and tile rooms where display cases will contain bones, machetes, and other relics of the killings, and then upstairs where a library will inform visitors about what happened in 1994. When I asked how the history of the genocide would be presented, he seemed not to have given it much thought. There was a genocide, everyone knew it, and the memorial would tell the story. But he was quite sure that, if it were up to him, the words "Hutu" and "Tutsi" would not appear anywhere in these rooms.

"We want to erase that, we want to put it in the past," Kazasomako said as we walked out into the sunlight. "Those words, that thinking, it's what the colonizers brought us. Before, we were well together."

We descended a flight of stairs down the hill to an iron-roofed shelter. Inside, a great mound of clothes lay heaped on the ground, stiff with dried blood and sewage, awaiting display. Scattered among the clothes were unsorted bones and personal effects: a rosary, a wallet, a green national identity card. I picked it up. The picture inside showed an unsmiling young man with a thin mustache. The first line read "Ethnicity: Hutu, Tutsi, Twa, Natural-

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In Kigese, a young woman accuses a prisoner of having killed her family. Marco Longari/galbe.com

ized." The booklet was too badly damaged to make out the entry.

"We want this to be talked about as something in the past, as history," Kazasomako said. "We want Rwandans who are young now not to know what the words mean when they grow up." He added, "And it's political. The government doesn't want it."

There is now a law in Rwanda that makes ethnic sectarianism a criminal offense. There is also an unwritten law that keeps people from talking about Hutu and Tutsi in polite company. Mucyo, the justice minister, told me, "I want us all to say, 'I'm Rwandan,'" which is also the RPF's line. But unfortunately it is not the way most people think. The old categories remain in place, more firmly than ever, in the way people construct their own and others' identities. "If you ban these terms," said a Hutu woman named Geneviève Mukandekezi, "they take a different form that's even more exclusive." Rwandans ask each other, *Ni uwacu?*—Is he one of us?

Given all the damage the terms have done, the taboo against "Hutu" and "Tutsi" is an understandable effort to break out of the vicious cycle of Rwandan history. But it's also an extension of that history, another silence imposed from above, and I didn't see how it could be squared with the other purpose of *gacaca* besides justice, which is reconciliation. It seemed to me that no one will be reconciled if Rwandans can't speak openly about the crimes of the past and the suspicions of the present—certainly not through *gacaca*, which insists that Rwandans address one another in the most public setting about the most difficult things. "One is in the same circle: authority doesn't accept criticism of its faults," said Thomas Kamilindi, the radio journalist. "When you criticize, they repress. That's why *gacaca*—what chance does it have with all that? There will be another chapter not yet written."

But the chapter being written now has no precedent in history, anywhere, and no one in Rwanda knows how *gacaca* will turn out. "That's why the government regards it jealously," said Laurien Ntezimana, who was imprisoned in Butare this past January after his small organization's newsletter printed a word meaning "rebirth of energy" that was also used by a banned political party. (He remains in

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prison as I write.) "They don't want us to throw ourselves into it—while we don't want the government to be involved. It's too important to put in their hands."

On one of my last days in Rwanda, I had an early view of what *gacaca* might be like. Under an enormous tree in a village an hour west of Kigali, a thousand people gathered from all over the sector. Fifteen prisoners arrived in the back of a pick-up truck clapping and singing: "Save me, because I have a human body! Save us, because there's war!" These were prisoners without files; the purpose of this "pre-*gacaca*" presentation was to gather evidence for the trials to come.

"What happened in 1994 everyone knows," a prosecutor from Jean Marie Mbarushimana's office told the crowd. "A lot of people died. They didn't kill themselves—others did it. They're in prison, but a lot of them are innocent. Those who died in '94 loved their lives, they were Rwandans, they had a right to their life. The prisoners also have a right to their life, though they're in prison. We bring these people here so you the population can say what you know."

One by one, the prosecutor called each prisoner forward and asked if anyone knew anything about him. The population, which was overwhelmingly Hutu and largely female, said little. Whether they mistrusted the authorities or were reluctant to testify against Hutus, here was Rwanda's culture of conformity and fear in plain view. At first only a few solitary Tutsis came forward to give testimony: a man in a khaki fishing hat; a young woman clutching an umbrella.

She said, "People who met us told us this was the one who killed my family," and she pointed in the prisoner's face, while he bowed his head. "He had dogs and he was pursuing Tutsis."

Rwandans are taught to measure their humanity by the extent of their self-control. Although the young woman was standing close enough to strike the prisoner, she did not lose her composure. The last time she had seen him, in 1994, she was as hunted as a rabbit, and he possessed the power of life and death. Her extended finger had to express all the fury and grief of the years since then.

As the afternoon wore on, there were cases where Hutus and Tutsis argued about the guilt of a prisoner; and there were even cases where Tutsis spoke on behalf of prisoners, two of whom were released.

"They're going to kill us," a survivor muttered as he walked away after making an accusation. "Really, they're going to kill us."

"Rwandans are wicked," a prisoner standing behind me said. "They keep quiet even when they know me."

So it went. The Tutsi survivors seemed utterly isolated. The Hutu population seemed uninterested in guilt. The standard of evidence was extremely low—hearsay, one person's word against another's. Justice and reconciliation after genocide? How was it possible? Here were only fifteen prisoners—I was exhausted contemplating the task ahead. And yet, unmistakably, it was beginning. The population headed home under late-afternoon rain clouds. The two prisoners who had been set free received the embraces of family and friends. The others were loaded into the truck and driven singing back to prison, where they will await *gacaca* with Camille Nzabonimana and a hundred thousand others. ●

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The Shark Cage

Fear in East Timor

Richard Lloyd Parry

EARLY EVERY Sunday morning, Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo, the winner of the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize, held Mass in the garden of his residence in the East Timorese capital, Dili. The day before the referendum on independence from Indonesia, when East Timor changed forever, I went there hoping to hear him preach. The dawn service was always an occasion of soft dignity, with prayers and singing beneath the flowering trees. On this Sunday, August 30, 1999, more people than usual were in the garden, although Belo had gone to a service on the south coast. A priest read out a message on the bishop's behalf: "Brothers and sisters, many people here in this time are very afraid. Do not be afraid. Be brave, and choose the future of East Timor. This is the generation that will create history, and one day people all over the world will speak of us, of the warrior people and the brave-hearted."

All afternoon, cars drove out of Dili as diplomats, electoral observers, activists and journalists dispersed across East Timor for voting day. A group of us squeezed into a Jeep and drove toward Maliana, a three-and-a-half hour journey to the west, close to the Indonesian border. In every village along the way there were guard posts manned by members of the pro-Indonesian militia. In the previous six months, with the undisguised support of the Indonesian Army and police, the militia had driven people out of their villages, burned their homes, and killed activists of the independence movement in an effort to intimidate the population and sabotage the referendum. The closer we got to Maliana, the more alarming the picture became. Half an hour out we saw a mixed group of machete-wielding militia and rifle-carrying soldiers; a few miles further on was another militia group, carrying its own M-16s.

Since the referendum had been announced, Maliana had been the site of intense and violent militia activity. Stone-throwing militiamen had attacked the local office of UNAMET, the United Nations Mission in East Timor, and the mood among its staff was quite different from that of their colleagues in the capital. In Dili they were wary of journalists, but here they felt isolated and neglected, and their isolation made them eager to talk.

They talked about the Besi Merah Putih, the local militia whose name meant "Red and White Iron." They spoke of the local military commander, who made no effort to disguise his relationship with the militias and his contempt for the UN. Several independence supporters had been murdered by the militia, and there were constant threats against UN staff. Three nights earlier, the house where the UN's military liaison officers lived was under fire for three hours. Four thousand people, one-third of Maliana's population, had deserted the town.

The Australian who ran UNAMET's Maliana office thought that his bosses in Dili did not take his concerns seriously. The violence, he believed, was not random and opportunistic, but part of a carefully laid plan that would climax in a militia attack on the UN and on known independence supporters. It would take place in the next few days, after the referendum. Automatic rifles would be distributed among the militia. The electricity supply would be cut to the entire town.

"And then?" I said.

"Then they can do whatever they like," he said. "The students have been attacked three times already, and they'll be the first to go. Then they'll probably go for the priests, and then they'll try it on here, but with something a bit stronger than rocks. So they'll be out there with their guns, and we'll be in here unarmed,

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trying to get out."

IT HAD BEEN eight months since my last visit, and I only had to look around to see that something drastic had happened to East Timor. At Dili airport, there was an air of bustle and urgency among the luggage handlers and the taxi drivers. Even after dark, there were young men and children on streets that formerly had been silent and deserted. But the biggest and most obvious sign of change was on the roads. Power-steering their way around every corner, parked in front of every official building, were the emblem of the United Nations in the third world: white Toyota Land Cruisers. Radio aerials curved from their potent hoods. Along the cliff roads and above the sea, in the markets, they glided through the rabble of bicycles and station wagons, like diesel-powered swans among ducklings. A white UN helicopter, stenciled with the blue symbol, buzzed to and fro. Children waved and cheered as it passed overhead. "UNAMET!" they shouted. "Hooray for UNAMET!"

It had all happened so quickly.

Indonesia invaded the Portuguese colony of East Timor in 1975, and during that time, by the most commonly quoted estimate, two hundred thousand people had died from the effects of war, disease, and famine. In 1997, on my first visit, Dili was a town of fear and spies, still living in the shadow of the most notorious of East Timor's massacres six years earlier, when hundreds of young mourners had been murdered by Indonesian soldiers in Santa Cruz cemetery. Then in May 1998, President Suharto, the Indonesian dictator, was forced from power by protests in Jakarta. Suddenly, the East Timorese had more freedom than at any time since the invasion.

Large-scale demonstrations were held and warily tolerated by the military. The clandestine groups opposing Indonesian rule had publicly set up shop in an office in the center of town. Even the East Timorese guerrillas, Falintil, were spending more and more time in the town, sneaking down from the jungle for meetings, rest, and conjugal visits.

In New York, the governments of Indonesia and the former colonial ruler, Portugal, continued to hold desultory meetings on East Timor, as they had done fruitlessly for years. The most recent talk was of an "autonomy package" that would give the province control over certain of its internal affairs. But everyone was taken by surprise when Suharto's protégé and successor, B. J. Habibie, suddenly announced that if its people rejected autonomy, East Timor could have its independence.

By the beginning of May 1999, after further talking in New York, Portugal and Indonesia reached an agreement: the UN would supervise something called a "popular consultation." It would involve a period of political campaigning, a choice between two options (autonomy or its rejection), and a popular vote. It sounded like a referendum, but Indonesian national pride was at stake, and so, officially at least, it could never be referred to as such.

There was jubilation among ordinary East Timorese and dismay on the part of Indonesian officials, army officers, and the powerful minority of East Timorese civil servants and regional chiefs who supported integration. Around the country, pro-Indonesian, anti-independence paramilitary groups, known as the militias, sprang up. In April they threw hand grenades into a church where fifteen hundred refugees had sought shelter, and shot and macheted dozens of them as they fled. The Aitarak, or "Thorn" militia, attacked the house of an independence leader in Dili and killed thirty more people. Reports of organized violent intimidation came from all over the country, but mostly from the west of the territory, close to the border with Indonesia. One element was common to all of them—the involvement of the Indonesian police and army, both as passive observers and active participants.

There were stories that Indonesian government officials—barred, under the UN agreement, from any part in the referendum—were already running pro-autonomy campaigns in the mountain villages. There were rumors that the militias were planning a "sweeping" operation in which thousands of them would descend on Dili to kill and drive out their opponents. In the larger towns, the supporters of independence mustered huge crowds in peaceful rallies; the pro-autonomy demonstrations inevitably ended in street fights, knifings, and deaths. The militia told their victims that *this*

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was what they could expect for supporting independence, and that if they were stupid enough to vote against autonomy, worse would come. And amid all this in May 1999 the United Nations landed in Dili, and the UN Mission in East Timor, UNAMET, was born.

UNAMET'S DILI headquarters were on the campus of Dili's former teachers' training college, a place known to everyone as "the compound." It consisted of a walled rectangle a few hundred yards long, wedged up at the rear against a steep hill. The offices were plain, whitewashed structures, many of them former classrooms, shaded by big green trees, and every vacant space was occupied by a Toyota Land Cruiser. I still dream about the compound; few places live so vividly in my memory. But on my first visit it made little impression.

The press office was responsible both for relations with the media, and for the public information campaign that UNAMET would soon launch on its own account. In charge was a dry, British-educated Canadian named David Wimhurst. On weekdays, he gave a briefing in the room next to his office, although in the early days of UNAMET there was often nothing to say. On such mornings, the game was to ask questions anyway, in the knowledge that sooner or later he would make the inevitable mistake.

"UNAMET just doesn't have the authority," Wimhurst would say tetchily after another question about why the UN wasn't doing more to thwart the militias. "The Indonesian police are entirely responsible for security matters up to, during, and after the referendum."

"Er, you just said 'referendum,' David," someone would point out.

"Popular consultation," Wimhurst would say quickly. "You're quite right. It's not a referendum, it's a popular consultation. And the Indonesian police are responsible for its security."

This was the problem. The UN knew what it was doing when it came to elections. In the weeks leading up to the vote, it would create an electoral register and conduct a public information campaign by radio, television, newspaper, pamphlet, and public information tours throughout the territory. It would distribute ballot boxes, ballot papers, and electoral lists, supervise the voting, transport the ballots back to Dili, and count them. For all these tasks, it had adequate numbers of experienced personnel. But it had only 270 civilian policemen—or "CivPols"—and just fifty military liaison officers—or MLOs. They were a picturesque force. Each wore his national uniform while on duty: the police sergeants from Japan and the army men from Uruguay. The chief of the MLOs, a Bangladeshi brigadier, strode about in dark glasses brandishing a little cane that quivered as he walked. His swagger stick was the heaviest weapon that UNAMET had at its disposal, for these were not "peacekeepers." Under the terms of the agreement signed in New York, responsibility for all aspects of security lay with the Indonesian police. And far from being the solution, the Indonesian police, along with the Indonesian Army, were the root cause of the misery that followed.

The police made no more than a token effort to disguise their enthusiasm for the militia cause. During the massacre in the church two months earlier, survivors reported seeing Indonesian infantry and members of the police mobile brigades, or Brimob, looking on. The gesture that many people regarded as the most flagrant insult to the UN had come the week before when the police had appointed a new head of the Dili branch of a local body of volunteer constables. The man they chose was Eurico Guterres, the "commander" of the Aitarak militia.

Should anyone have been surprised? The Indonesians in East Timor were notorious as thugs, torturers, and sadists. This was the way it had been for twenty-four years. Anyone could have predicted that they would fight to hold on to the place, using every vicious tactic they knew. How could the UN have hoped for a peaceful referendum under such conditions? Why had it not insisted on armed peacekeepers with the power to arrest, investigate, and, if necessary, to shoot those who used terror to get their way?

Afterward, when it was too late, the question was put repeatedly, and various answers were proposed. One suggestion was that the UN had been distracted. The period of most

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intense negotiations coincided with the crisis and then with the air war in Kosovo, when the concentration of the organization had been focused elsewhere. Another response was that the UN had caved in, capitulating to the Indonesians on this as it had so often done since 1975. But the most convincing answer was that the UN had little choice.

President Habibie's decision to allow the referendum was a historic opportunity. If he were forced out or replaced (as he would be, by the end of 1999) that opportunity might be lost forever. "The UN could have said no, and the whole thing would have been called off," one of the UNAMET staff said to me, "and for the next twenty-three years, we'd have had chunks ripped out of our sides for the great opportunity that we'd thrown up. But we didn't, and we're here. The system's not perfect, in fact it's terrible, and God knows what's going to happen before this is over. But it will get done, and whatever happens, the world will see it."

A bit later, he said, "We're asking for one last act of bravery from the people of East Timor."

After it was all over, when there was much bitter talk about UNAMET and its responsibilities, I sometimes recounted that conversation to Timorese who had lived through the violence. Some of them had lost as much as one can lose. But not one of them said that it was a mistake, or that it would have been better if UNAMET had never come to East Timor in the first place.

On the day of the referendum, I dressed before dawn and walked with my East Timorese guide toward Maliana's polling center, a grubby sports hall that faced onto the town green. He gasped as we turned the corner. It was a remarkable and thrilling sight.

There was more than half an hour to go until the polls opened, but already the green was filling with thousands of people. They streamed in from all directions, in groups large and small, carrying bundles of food, infants, and even rolls of bedding. The older men and women wore batik headdresses, the younger ones wore cleanly pressed jeans and rubber sandals. They pressed close against the wide, barn-like doors of the hall. But there was no shoving and shouting, no obvious excitement, not even much smiling. Many of the expressions were earnest, even anxious. They were there for a reason: to vote and then to get back home as quickly as possible. On the outer fringes of the crowd, people squatted on the grass and unwrapped small breakfast parcels of rice and vegetables. A group of militiamen, apparently unarmed, stood beneath a large sandalwood tree. An invisible force field surrounded them: despite the surging volume of the crowd, no one approached within ten yards.

Eventually, the crowd parted enough for us to squeeze narrowly into the hall. Inside, final preparations were being made before the doors were opened. The polling station staff were sealing up the ballot boxes after showing their empty insides to the observers. A line of tables had been set up, bearing pens, pencils, a box for the registration forms, and a plastic bottle of ink for marking the fingers of those who had voted. Outside, the UN staff organized the crowd into a rough queue. At exactly 6.30 a.m., the first voters were allowed in.

First inside was Guillherme Dos Santos, the regent of Bobonaro, a notorious sponsor of the Besi Merah Putih, plump and sleek in shiny batik. "Of course, we're not supposed to give preferential treatment to anyone," said the UN volunteer at my side. "It's a compromise, but look how happy he is." The next to be admitted were the very elderly and the infirm.

Among them was a middle-aged man supported on two broken sticks. His legs were bent permanently beneath him by accident or disease, and it took him five minutes to cross the room, collect his ballot, and shuffle into the booth in front of me. I should have looked away, but I watched, and saw him painfully mark his cross in the lower of the two boxes, the one rejecting continuing association with Indonesia. He folded the paper, and began the painful walk to the ballot box. It was the second vote of the day; across the country, hundreds of thousands remained to be cast. But at that moment I stopped wondering about the result. If such a man was able to ignore terror and infirmity to make his choice, there was little doubt what the rest of his brave people would choose.

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WHATEVER OTHER mistakes UNAMET made, as an electoral exercise the referendum was an astonishing success. By lunchtime, across East Timor, four out of five of those who had registered had cast their votes. The final turnout was 98.6 percent. In the whole country, only 6,000 people had failed to vote out of an electorate of 438,000. Had any free election anywhere in the world ever secured such a remarkable turnout? Nobody I asked could think of one.

That night, the UNAMET helicopter flew around the polling centers, collecting the ballots and bringing them back to Dili. In Ermera, two votes were lost when a ballot box split open as militia men fired blunderbusses and threw stones at the staff who were loading it onto the helicopter. In Atsabe, a Timorese who was working for the UN was stabbed through the lung and died two hours later. His name was João Lopez Gomez. He was the first UN worker to die. But overall the day had gone more smoothly than anyone had dared hope.

The predicted attack on Maliana did not come that night. There were no reports of significant intimidation. Ambassador Jamsheed Marker, the grandiloquent Pakistani who was Kofi Annan's special envoy on East Timor, spent the day flying from town to town, and the experience stirred his poetic soul. "I returned with vivid impressions of the awesome majesty which is manifest in the power of the people," he told a press conference in the Mahkota Hotel, late in the evening when the observers and journalists had returned to Dili.

"Many who went to the polling stations today did so under conditions of considerable hardship. They defied poverty, distance, climate, terrain, and, in some cases, dark intimidation in order to exercise their God-given right to vote in freedom. . . .Whatever the outcome, the eagle of liberty has spread its proud wings over the people of East Timor and nothing, by God's grace, will ever take it away."

Marker was not slow to identify the agency responsible for this heartening outcome: the Indonesian police. Their conduct, he said, had been "of the highest order". The leadership of their commanding officer, Colonel Timbul Silaien, had been "superb."

The result was announced in the ballroom of the Mahkota Hotel at 9 a.m. on Saturday, September 4. The announcement was not due for another three days, but the count had gone quickly. It must have seemed a good idea to get the news out as soon as possible, and to catch unprepared the plotters and the conspirators. But later people cursed UNAMET for this decision. Ordinary Timorese, too, were making their plans—plans to leave the towns and head for the hills or the countryside, to send into hiding children and friends in the independence movement or, at the very least, to gather supplies in preparation for days or weeks of danger and isolation. By Saturday, none of these plans had been completed. Much later, a Timorese friend said to me: "People died, I think, because they announced the result early."

The ballroom was packed. Ian Martin, the special representative of the UN secretary-general, walked in quickly and read out the results. He was a thin, bespectacled man with a patient, bureaucratic manner which tended to enfeeble his angrier and more forceful statements. When the announcement came, it was almost anticlimactic. Strict instructions had gone around the UN staff not to show any visible reaction to the result, and among the journalists this had also been agreed. "In fulfillment of the task entrusted to me," said Ian Martin. "I hereby announce that the result of the vote is 94,388 or 21.5 percent in favor and 344,580 or 78.5 percent against the proposed special autonomy."

Four out of five East Timorese had voted for independence.

Martin read out a statement on behalf of the secretary-general, Kofi Annan, but even before he finished, people were walking out of the room. A murmuring crowd was gathering in the hotel's dingy lobby. People smiled thinly at one another, and congratulated the few East Timorese who were standing around. My driver, a man named John, was there, and as I walked toward him he ran forward and embraced me, pressing his face into my shirt.

"John, John," I said. "Independence! *Independencia.* East Timor is free."

He let me go and shook my hand gravely. Tears were on his cheeks. He looked terrified.

On the steps of the hotel, people were

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standing around uncertainly. There were no cheering crowds, no jubilation. Apart from a single vendor, the street was empty. Whatever else happened, it seemed important to buy a lot of cigarettes. As I was paying the vendor and stuffing the packets into my bag, a pair of Aitarak men drove slowly by on motorbikes, eyeing the front of the hotel.

From the Mahkota to the Hotel Turismo, where most journalists were staying, was ten minutes on foot, but this morning nobody wanted to walk. John's jeep quickly filled up with people who needed rides. At the quayside was a large barge, and in front of it a crowd of people waiting to sail to Indonesian West Timor, burdened with infants, mattresses, refrigerators, motorbikes, and even pieces of furniture. Small groups of women and children were converging on Bishop Belo's garden, where hundreds more were already camping out beneath the trees.

Inside the Turismo we went to our shortwave radios and computers to check the headlines. It was strange: here we were, witnesses to this remarkable news, and yet for the moment what we had seen with our own eyes was less important than the rest of the world's reaction to it. People called out the headlines as they came up. From his house arrest in Jakarta, the Falintil commander Xanana Gusmao said, "This day will be eternally remembered as the day of national liberation." José Ramos-Horta, who had shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Belo, had words for the defeated supporters of autonomy: "They have not lost—they have won a country." There was even a reaction from the Aitarak leader, Eurico Guterres. "We are defeated diplomatically," he was quoted as saying. "But we will not give up." Eurico was no longer in Dili, it seemed. He had got on the morning flight to Jakarta, and it was difficult to tell whether this was a good sign or a bad one. "Either he's throwing in the towel," said my British friend Alex, "or he knows that something very nasty's going to happen."

FOUR PLANES full of journalists left the next day, and the population of the hotel dwindled to its dregs. Those of us who had decided to stay gathered in the garden and organized ourselves. There were fewer than twenty of us—Alex and I, a handful of other newspaper correspondents, several stringers, a couple of documentary makers and a single photographer. The Turismo's staff had gone. We began by drawing up a list of our names. Someone volunteered to gather food supplies and look after the cooking. Someone else took responsibility for establishing escape routes from the hotel, in case it should be attacked. *Pop, pop* went the blunderbusses in the background. *Thucka-thucka-thucka* went the AK-47s and the M-16s. Then they fell quiet for an hour or more. Members of the food committee sat in the garden, discussing that night's dinner. I began to think about what I would write.

In the late afternoon I dozed, and when I woke up everything had changed. People were trotting urgently across the garden carrying bags and equipment. A captain in the Indonesian marines was standing at the front of the hotel talking to the few journalists who understood Indonesian. Two dozen armed marines stood at the front of the hotel; they carried automatic rifles and long combat knives and wore flak jackets. And they had bad news. A "warning" had been received that Aitarak was planning an attack on the hotel. Aitarak, with its leather jackets, rusty machetes, and pop guns, was hardly a formidable threat. Nonetheless, the Indonesian marine corps was "unable to guarantee security."

"But why not?" one of the Indonesian speakers asked, pointing to the captain's rifle. "You have this. You are strong. Make the Aitarak go away."

The captain smiled and shrugged and spread the palms of his hands wide.

"'Cannot guarantee security,'" someone else repeated. "'Cannot guarantee security.' Well that's enough for me. I know a death threat when I hear it."

The first of three open-backed police trucks was already pulling up in front of the hotel. I hurried back to my room, shouldered my knapsack, and hesitated over my suitcase before deciding to leave it. I locked the door behind me.

The chairman of the escape committee had elected to stay on with a handful of others, but everyone else was moving to UNAMET. It was

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becoming impossible to work in the Turismo; in a few days we would return here when everything had calmed down. But once we were in the big truck I felt angry. The policemen laughed as they pushed us over the wooden sides into the truck. The police colonel overseeing the operation barked at us as we heaved up boxes and bags and bottles of water. We were so obviously doing exactly what they wanted.

The trucks started off with deliberate abruptness, and the Indonesians traveling with us guffawed again as the jolt sent us sprawling. I pulled myself off the man from the *Sydney Morning Herald* and looked back toward the hotel to see a militiaman run out from a side street. He brandished a homemade blunderbuss, which he pointed toward us. Soldiers and police watched him with amusement from just feet away. The gun went off with a resonant pop, and we all cringed into the corners of the truck. It had no chance of hitting us. It was more of a two-fingered salute than a genuine attempt on our lives. We picked ourselves up, and the policemen riding with us snickered once again.

At the UN compound, nobody was surprised to see us. The staff were moving in themselves; floor space quickly filled up with folded camp beds and boxes of food. But here at least there were computers and power sockets and satellite telephone connections. I found myself a camp table, a plug, and an ashtray, and sat down to write.

THE WORST THING happened about an hour later. It began with a new kind of shooting, not pop guns or automatics, but the long, ratcheting bursts of a machine gun, very close, from the other side of the compound. We hurried outside, and now there was a new noise—the screaming of women, close at hand, but muffled, coming in waves from over the wall.

The wall divided the UNAMET compound from an abandoned school next door. The place had completely filled with refugees, who were eating and sleeping on the floors of the classrooms. Now somebody was firing a machine gun over their heads. The rounds were purely for effect. They harmed no one directly, but they didn't need to. There were more than a thousand people in the school, most of them women and children, and now they were all rushing, terrified, for the single door that connected the school to UNAMET. A similar panic had occurred the previous week, and someone in the UN had taken a decision: not only had the door been locked, but the top of the wall had been festooned with bales of bright new razor wire.

The door quickly burst open, and people oozed through it, winded and crushed against the narrow wooden frame. The wall was only seven feet high, and people on the far side were attempting to climb over the wire. They tried to use clothes and bedding to cover its sharp teeth. Parents behind were pushing their children over the top. The children were being forced onto the barbs. Bags were being thrown over and becoming entangled. There were Indonesian policemen in the school, bellowing at the refugees and trying to pull them back. The CivPols in the compound were carrying megaphones and booming uselessly through them in English. The machine gun fire stopped, and then another volley was heard again, followed by a new wave of collective screaming.

I stood close to the gate and thought, what is the best thing to do? I didn't know. No one knew. So I shouted out to the CivPol with the megaphone, "They can't understand you! They don't speak English." Then I just stood and listened to the screaming. I could feel the terror almost physically, like a wind. How strong is the fear that makes a mother lift her baby over her head and push him onto razor wire?

Finally the refugees calmed down. The shooting had stopped, but it was obvious that it could start again at any time. So the door was opened and the refugees came through one by one, calmly now, with sobs instead of cries, some of them gashed and bleeding where they had been bitten by the barbs. That night the man from the UN High Commission for Refugees told me that there were one hundred and fifty thousand people displaced across East Timor. Fifteen hundred of them were here with us now, inside the compound.

The gunfire continued through the evening, sometimes close by, sometimes distant, but by

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now it was little more than background noise. At 10:37 p.m., there was an intense and prolonged burst. Ten minutes later came a loud, proximate boom that shook the windows and was followed by the shrill sound of more automatic fire.

"Down!" someone shouted. "Off with the lights." Everyone in the press room jumped to the floor and crawled up against the walls and beneath tables.

There was silence. Someone gave a mirthless giggle. A match flared, and soon the only light in the room came from a dozen orange cigarette tips. I thought of the head of the escape committee and the small band that had remained in the Turismo, and wondered how they were.

On the tops of the desks, UNAMET walkie-talkies sat in their rechargers, crackling out conversations between the CivPols and MLOs, as they peered out into the darkness.

There's the glow of a fire on the horizon. Crackle, crackle.

We have a group of men, possibly military, possibly militia, moving away from the west wall of the compound. Crackle. Silence.

The weapon has been identified. A grenade, a military issue grenade.

Ten minutes later, the alarm was over and the lights were back on.

Who threw that grenade? It hardly mattered. The only difference between the militias and the Indonesian security forces was the uniform. I carried the camp table outside and finished writing my story in the open air. The satellite lines were congested, so I called London on my mobile phone and dictated the story, reading it out word by word. Afterward, I drank whisky with my friends, nibbled at the unappetizing rations, and smoked and smoked. When it was very late, we helped one another erect the clumsy camp beds. There was no space left in the press office, so I placed my bed outside, under the eaves of an old classroom. I fell asleep without difficulty. And I dreamed.

It was dusk on Sunday when I had arrived at the UN compound; I would leave on Tuesday afternoon. I doubt that I will ever experience another forty-eight hours so fearful and intense. At other times and places in Indonesia, I had seen violence and cruelty. But even at the worst, I had watched them on my own terms; at any point I chose, I could step away from it to food, company, and a peaceful bed. In Dili, all of these were gone. Law, reason, pity, civilization itself had shrunk to the breadth of the UN compound, to the few hundred square yards between the crumbling walls of the old teacher training college. When I slept on my camp bed outside the press room, I didn't dream only conventional nightmares of pursuit and violence. I dreamed of being a small child: of going to church with my grandparents, of holding the hands of my mother and father. I dreamed of all the certainties that had gone from Timor: the child's trust in the parents, the parents' promise that everything will be all right. They were the saddest dreams possible in such a place, and I woke with tears in my eyes.

I dreamed, too, of being a diver inside a shark cage. I wore an old-fashioned diving suit; the walls and floor of the cage were thin aluminum bars. The water all around was murky and cold, and there was a rushing noise in my ears. Without warning giant shapes emerged out of the dimness: sharks. They swam around the cage with terrible speed, and their noses clanged against the bars, which bent and snapped and fell away. Soon there were no bars at all, just me suspended alone in the current with the sharks swimming around me, brushing my diving suit, circling me over and again, as I waited for the parting of the jaws and the lunge that would end it all. I could feel tugs on the tube that connected me to the surface and I knew that it was a message in a code that I had once understood but that had become meaningless to me.

Even now it is difficult to understand the violence, instigated and overseen by the Indonesian Army, that followed the referendum. No outside agency had forced the popular consultation on Indonesia. President Habibie himself had suggested it. The Indonesian government had freely signed the agreement with Portugal and the United Nations that brought UNAMET into being. And the violence we witnessed was so messy, indecisive, and ugly. Burned houses, terrified moth-

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ers and children, frightened UN workers—it seemed almost calculated to make the worst possible impression on international opinion.

But among army and police officers in East Timor itself, and at least among their immediate superiors in the regional command, there was a remarkable degree of planning, coordination, and control. Like all war zones, East Timor occupied an emotional place in the military psyche. Plenty of senior Indonesian officers had served their time there, and for many of them, East Timor was the formative experience of their lives. They had killed there, and seen their friends killed; for the first time, they had been afraid. East Timor was a proving ground and a symbol of the proud unity of the Indonesian state. Now the bug-eyed, lickspittle Habibie was giving it away.

Habibie's announcement appalled and affronted the armed forces, and the violence and intimidation they fomented had several goals. The most obvious was to reduce the number of ballots cast for independence by terrifying voters into supporting the other side or by driving people out of their villages so that they couldn't register and vote. The terror also served as a goad to Falintil. If the guerrillas could be provoked to fight back, then the army would have the excuse it needed to call off the ballot and resume its operations.

But why go to such trouble after the referendum? The battle was lost; the cause was hopeless. And it was not as if the violence was an instinctive reaction. How remarkable, for example, that, despite the close shaves, none of the "internationals"—no journalist, observer, or foreign UN worker—had been killed. The intention was to terrify but always, at the last moment, to turn the flat of the blade.

One theory had it that the violence was not principally aimed at the East Timorese, but at other rebellious provinces of Indonesia—at Aceh and at West Papua. "You want independence?" the army was asking. "This is what you will get." Before the referendum there was also an idea, popular among militia leaders, that having been cheated of their rightful victory, the pro-Indonesian forces would retreat to West Timor and take with them the four westernmost provinces, which would secede to Indonesia. But the plan came to nothing. It was a fantasy—indeed, beyond the menace and violence, there was a childish quality to the whole undertaking: the oily alienated youths in their fighting fantasy militia uniforms, the drugs and the motorbikes, the toy blunderbusses. What made it unbearably frightening was the presence of efficient and grown-up killers in army uniforms, egging them on, giving them guns and bullets, and joining in themselves.

THERE MAY indeed have been orders from the top, but when the time came nothing so direct as an order was necessary. Everything had been laid carefully in place, responsibility had already been dispersed across so many different departments, commands, and individuals, that no words were necessary. Jakarta's silence was the command. In East Timor, the army knew what to do, and once the violence started it gathered speed and power and continued until it had exhausted itself. This was the strangest and most fearful aspect of the violence in East Timor: it could be meticulous and methodical and at the same time so completely out of control.

The UNAMET walkie-talkie on the desk where I wrote crackled out the conversations of the CivPols as they warily patrolled the compound. For most of Monday, these exchanges were technical and uninteresting reports on the movement of troops, the direction of gunfire, and the movement of staff. But by the evening—my second in the compound—the character of the reports changed, and as I reviewed the events of the day, turning over in my mind what had happened and what might come, the little black radio began to give me the spooks.

Repeated gunfire on the way to the airport.

Numerous militias on street. Streets are impassable without armed escort.

Smoke rising from the second floor of the electoral commission building. Houses of the Portuguese mission burning.

The shooting started up outside again. The phones were ringing with requests for interviews. I spoke with an Austrian news agency and the BBC, and the act of articulating the situation to an interviewer thousands of miles away made it appear far worse than I had previously imagined it. The thrust of the questions

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seemed to be, do you expect to be killed tonight?

That night, September 7, at a quarter to four in the morning, a child was born in the small clinic at the back of the compound. The mother was a refugee named Joanna Rodriguez; the child, a boy, was baptized immediately by a member of the UN mission who happened to be a Jesuit priest. He was christened Pedro Rodriguez, and his middle name was given as UNAMET. Later I would hear this described as a gesture of "gratitude" to the United Nations for "protecting" Joanna Rodriguez and her family. But I liked to think of it as something more ambiguous and ironic: a reproach, as well as a plea; a challenge to UNAMET, a direct look into Kofi Annan's eyes.

It was quiet compared to other nights: one burst of concentrated automatic fire at midnight and a second one a few hours later. Two hours after that the cockerels started crowing and with them began another distinctive sound, the low, whispering bustle of the waking refugees. There were two thousand now, but their presence could not have been more discreet or unobtrusive. Without fuss or supervision, they had filled the space between the buildings with colored blankets and faded sheets. After dark, they sat in family groups, whispering to one another or singing prayers and hymns *pianissimo*.

In the two days I spent among them, I saw no fights and no fits of temper, no thievery or truculence. Even the babies hardly cried, and despite the uncertainty, the rumors, and the shooting all around, there was no pleading or begging, no ranting or ill-temper or threats.

I began to dread the sight of the refugees, for I was becoming preoccupied by a single question: should I stay or run away?

The choice was held out to me, for more evacuation flights were scheduled today. No one could say whether there would be any tomorrow. Outside the press room a list was being drawn up of those intending to evacuate, and my friends were discussing what to do. I marked my name down on the list, then took it off, and then marked it down again.

I paced around the compound, seeking out corners that I had not seen before, as if its physical structure, the condition of the paths and roofs and windows, could provide me with an answer to my dilemma. I took many photographs; I felt an urgent need to fix in my mind the appearance of the compound, this mundane, remarkable place. The outer walls were crumbling cement. At the very back was a gap in the wall beneath the steep slope that led up and away to the hills behind Dili. After dark, many of the refugees were slipping through here to spend the night on the summit, rather than in the snare of the compound.

At 8.20 a.m. there was a burst of phosphorescent tracer fire across the slopes of the hill.

It was about this time, mid morning, that a small new crisis unfolded within the larger one: simultaneously, it seemed, the entire compound was running out of cigarettes. I was down to my last, my very last, packet, and the prospect of being without them made me feel weak. I found a camp chair beneath a wide cool tree on the edge of the yard and smoked three in a row. Soon, my head was beating with exhaustion, nicotine, and lack of food. In front of me was a Land Cruiser that had been shot up the previous day on the way to the airport. Its rear window was a mess of jagged glass pebbles.

Hour by hour, the morale of the mission was fraying, and all morning UNAMET people sidled up with alarming and subversive nuggets of information. The warehouse had been looted. No, the warehouse had been burned. Evacuation was imminent. Evacuation had been postponed. A group of fifty UNAMET staff were preparing to break away from UNAMET and live in the hills with Falintil and the refugees. Have you heard? Are you leaving? Do you have any cigarettes?

My fear needed reasons, and it found them in the idea of evacuation. It seemed inevitable that at some point there would be a general withdrawal to the airport. Whether the East Timorese were flown out or left to their fate, it would be a time of dread and chaos. I imagined the mutinous disgust among the younger UNAMET staff when the order came through, the angry fear of the East Timorese. Would the CivPols follow their orders? Would they make their escape up the hill? I pictured myself squeezed into a Land Cruiser for the proces-

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sion through the streets, the snarling of the Aitarak motorbikes, the waving of the blunderbusses. A scared, flustered driver taking a wrong turn, the way blocked by militia, Brimobs looking the other way, and the seduction of a trigger, one squeeze, just to see: what would it look like?

The gates of the compound opened and an Indonesian Army truck backed in, the truck that would carry the day's evacuees to the airport. People heaved up bags and boxes. A New Zealand MLO clambered in and took charge of the loading operation. "All aboard, ladies and gentlemen," he piped cheerfully. "Bags on the outside, bodies on the inside."

I stood up and walked toward the truck.

Another of the MLOs, a British colonel, was standing to one side watching.

"Are you going, Richard?"

"I don't know. I don't know."

"You don't want to stay with us, see this through?"

"I don't know."

There was a rattle of automatic fire, and with it a new sound, a migraine whistling that accompanied each report.

"Now *that*," said the colonel, "was close. When they fire into the air you just hear the crack. But when you hear the bullet singing, that means it's directly overhead."

Two Australian radio reporters ran up dressed in helmets and flak jackets and began loading their bags into the truck. The tailgate was being raised, and the colonel was saying good-bye to those on board. I stood there, waiting for somebody to stop me from going, to make me stay.

"Good-bye, Richard. Good luck!" said the colonel. "Don't worry about it. I'll see you in Darwin."

I was inside the back of the truck.

From the truck, the compound suddenly seemed a very safe place to be. The sides were made of wooden slats, with inch-wide gaps between them. Briefcases, suitcases, boxes, and backpacks were stacked up against them to form an unstable inner wall. A tremendous fusillade of automatic fire fetched up from close by as we passed the UNAMET gates.

"Heads down, ladies and gentleman," said the New Zealander. There were about a dozen of us in the back along with eleven Indonesian soldiers. I had no flak jacket; instead, I had a portable computer in a leather bag. I braced it vertically between my head and the wooden sides, and wondered exactly what effect the interposition of a Toshiba laptop would have upon an M-16 round. I looked at the Indonesians who stood above us with smirking expressions. They felt no need to cower in the bottom of the truck—our guards, here to protect us against an attack by their own comrades.

THROUGH THE SLATS, I glimpsed Dili utterly transformed. It felt like a science-fiction film, a journey through a town overtaken by body-snatchers. During the fifteen-minute trip to the airport, I saw not a single ordinary person. The shops were boarded and shut, the houses still. In front of them, milling singly and in groups, were hundreds of soldiers and black-shirted militia.

The streets teemed with them. I felt a wave of nausea, like the shock of opening a neglected cupboard to find it teeming with rats or maggots. I saw one Aitarak man with an AK-47; the rest carried spears or machetes, and the soldiers above us waved and smiled at them. Behind us passed a stolen UNAMET Land Cruiser, driven by a grinning militiaman, although which were genuine East Timorese and which were soldiers in bandannas it was difficult to tell. The shooting resumed again in the middle distance. Thick smoke from newly set fires rose close to the road. I had been in the compound for forty-eight hours and the sudden sensation of being outside and in motion produced a rush of euphoria. The airport was as ghostly as the town. Papery litter drifted around. Someone had removed all the light bulbs from the overhead sockets. At passport control was an unexpected sight: a dozen young Australian soldiers, several of them women. Very formally and politely, they checked our bags and passports and explained the operation of the seat belts. "Just a few quick health questions, sir," said a soldier with a red cross on her armband. "This may sound a bit strange, but have you been scuba-diving at any time in the last week?"

The Hercules could be heard, its engine

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roaring out on the tarmac. We ran toward its stubby shape, cringing in the noise and heat. The surge of adrenaline was ebbing now, and I began to feel deep weariness and inklings of dread, as if I had done something unforgivable and was only now beginning to remember what it was. The engine pulsed and surged; the wheels rumbled below us and then came that moment of sudden lightness and lift, and we were in the air.

The hold of the plane was dark and windowless, but the cockpit was flooded with light. Spread out below in greens and browns, almost close enough to touch, was Dili. It terrified me to see it still there. I could make out the familiar landmarks: Motael Church and the cathedral, Bishop Belo's house, even the Turismo. But the rest of the town was all fires.

Even from this height, I could see the licking shapes of individual flames in the town center. Two large Indonesian naval ships lay at anchor off shore. The town grew distant as the plane rose, but I felt myself to be the one who was sinking, as if I were looking up at Dili from the bottom of a deep and narrow well. ●

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Raising the Cost of Genocide

Samantha Power

Raphael Lemkin, a Polish jurist who lost forty-nine members of his family in the Holocaust, invented the word "genocide" in 1944 because he believed that, in the aftermath of the Turkish "race murder" of the Armenians and of Hitler's extermination campaign against the Jews, the world's "civilized" powers needed to band together to outlaw crimes that were said to "shock the conscience." Prior to Lemkin's coinage, the systematic targeting of national, ethnic, or religious groups was known as "barbarity," a word that Lemkin believed failed to convey the unique horror of the crime. "Genocide," he hoped, would send shudders down the spines of those who heard it and oblige them to prevent, punish, and even suppress the carnage.

An amateur historian of mass slaughter from medieval times to the twentieth century, Lemkin knew that genocide would continue to occur with "biological regularity." Moreover, he knew from reviewing the recent past that if it were left to political leaders to decide how to respond, they would inevitably privilege their short-term interests over both the moral imperative of stopping genocide and the long-term consequences of ignoring it.

In 1948, largely on Lemkin's prodding, the UN General Assembly unanimously passed the United Nations' first-ever human rights treaty, the Genocide Convention, which required signatories "to undertake to prevent and punish" genocide. The Convention's language was vague on precisely how the UN member states would meet their obligations, making no mention of military intervention and trusting that domestic prosecution of future "genocidists" would deter massacres. Still, the lively debates over ratification that occurred in national legislatures testified to the seriousness with which delegates believed they were committing their country's resources and prestige to banning targeted slaughter.

More than a half century has passed since the Genocide Convention came into effect, and genocide has proceeded virtually unabated. Press coverage of the atrocities has generated outrage, but it has generally been insufficient to prompt Western action. As the 1990s showed, particularly in the reactions of the United States and Europe to carnage in Yugoslavia and Rwanda (the scene, in 1994, of the fastest and most efficient genocidal campaign of the twentieth century), Western countries replicated the pattern established in their earlier responses to the rise and domination of Hitler—long after they had supposedly internalized the "lessons of the Holocaust."

In order to understand this pattern—and by extension, put an end to it—we must first confront the grim record of international responses to genocide in the twentieth century. In 1915, the Turkish minister of the interior, Talaat Pasha, and the other Young Turk leaders set out to solve Turkey's "Armenia problem" by murdering leading Armenian intellectuals and deporting the rest of the population into the desert, where many would be killed by local gendarmerie, by starvation, or by disease. Some one million Armenians died. Germany, which was aligned with Turkey in the war, actively covered up eyewitness reports of atrocities. Russia, Britain, and France, fighting against Turkey and Germany in the war, publicized ghastly massacre reports. The Allies also called upon the United States to use its leverage as a neutral power either to convince Turkey to mend its ways or to press Germany to squeeze its ally. Woodrow Wilson's administration carefully guarded its neutrality, which was strongly favored by the American people,

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and resisted these calls for diplomatic intervention. With the exception of the U.S. ambassador in Constantinople (now Istanbul) Henry Morgenthau, Sr., and other consular officials in the field, U.S. officials remained mute. A nongovernmental organization known as the Armenia Atrocities Committee drew wide public attention to the murder of fellow Christians and even managed to raise money for humanitarian aid. But the group drew the ire of former president Theodore Roosevelt for simultaneously denouncing the Turkish slaughter and opposing U.S. military intervention with pacifist appeals to "put safety first." In the end, despite heavy coverage of the Turkish horrors in the *New York Times* and elsewhere, Wilson took no measures that would have put U.S. neutrality in doubt. When the United States finally entered the war in 1917, it did not declare war on Turkey and did not join the Allies' postwar efforts to prosecute Turkish war criminals.

The Nazi genocide, which followed two decades later, left six million Jews and five million Poles, Roma, homosexuals, and political opponents dead. Before the Holocaust, neither U.S. nor European diplomats uttered much protest when Germany passed the Nuremberg Laws and began destroying Jewish businesses, synagogues, and homes. Britain and France went to war with Germany after it invaded Poland in September 1939. But President Franklin Roosevelt, like Wilson, kept America neutral. Only after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and after Adolf Hitler declared war on the United States did the United States join the European battle. Together, the Allies did nothing directly aimed at impeding the Nazis' extermination of the Jews. They feared that drawing attention to the murder of Jews or admitting additional refugees would undermine domestic public support for the war. Thus, they downplayed the numerous and graphic atrocity reports smuggled out of Nazi-occupied territory or intercepted by Allied intelligence officials. They took shelter in the utter inconceivability of what was being documented. To those who pressed for sterner measures, Western leaders argued that the Allies would achieve more by focusing their military resources on winning battlefield victories than on disrupting concentration camp traffic.

The Nuremberg and Tokyo trials prosecuted the leading perpetrators of crimes against humanity after the Second World War, but political leaders saw the real crime of the Axis powers as waging a "crime against peace." Although the mere fact of prosecution represented a major inroad into state sovereignty, the wartime perpetrators were not prosecuted for crimes they committed before the Nazi invasion of Poland. The cardinal sin was not seen to be Hitler's "genocide" (a term rarely used at Nuremberg), but the cross-border aggression, which was a permanent threat to international stability and, by inference, the strategic interests of the world's leading powers.

The 1948 Genocide Convention, by contrast, made political leaders liable for genocide committed during peace or wartime, inside a state or outside it. Still, in 1969, Britain maintained active support for the Nigerian government while it starved and murdered the Ibo people of Biafra. Eyeing potentially vast oil reserves in Iboland, the United States and the other European powers followed the British lead, opposing Biafran secession and insisting that food be delivered through Lagos, even though the Nigerian government openly used starvation as a weapon of war. Two years later, the Western powers did not protest when Pakistan responded to a Bengali autonomy movement in East Pakistan by sending in its army and murdering more than a million people. The Nixon administration backed Pakistan, which was its intermediary with the People's Republic of China, and, when the U.S. consul-general in Dhaka dissented, the State Department recalled him from his post. In 1972, when the Tutsi government in Burundi killed some hundred thousand Hutu, the Western powers downplayed the atrocities, treating them as an "internal affair." In all three cases of genocide, the economic and strategic interests of the United States and its European allies caused them to side with the genocidal governments and to invoke "sovereignty" as an excuse for refraining even from complaint.

One might have expected a more spirited response to the Cambodian genocide that occurred from 1975 to 1979 because it was com-

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munist radicals (known as the Khmer Rouge, or Red Khmer) who murdered nearly two million of the country's seven million people. But in the aftermath of Vietnam, Western governments paid little heed to bloodshed committed in a part of the world they were anxious to leave behind. President Gerald Ford denounced the Khmer Rouge's massacres for a month, but then went completely silent. President Jimmy Carter, the first U.S. president to champion human rights, made no mention of Pol Pot's slaughter for the first two years of his presidency. Although the United States had recently renewed diplomatic ties with China, U.S. officials did not ask China to use its influence with the Khmer Rouge. Once the Vietnamese had overthrown the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime in January 1979, the Carter administration, Ronald Reagan's administration, and all of the European powers maintained recognition of the regime rather than allow the Vietnamese-installed government to be seated at the United Nations or leave the UN seat empty. Pol Pot's representatives occupied Cambodia's seat at the UN for another decade.

In 1987-1988, Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein set out to wipe out the country's rural Kurdish population. Iraqi soldiers and police bulldozed several thousand villages, rounded up and executed men, women, and children who remained in homes that fell within Hussein's "prohibited zones," and turned chemical weapons against the Kurdish people, sending tens of thousands of civilians fleeing into neighboring Turkey and Iran. Several European states armed Hussein in this period, and the Reagan administration provided more than five hundred million dollars worth of annual agricultural and manufacturing credits. For the first year of the campaign, none of the Western powers condemned the atrocities, even privately. When Senators Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.) and Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) introduced sanctions legislation that would have suspended the generous U.S. credit program, the Reagan administration and the farm lobby blocked the measure, even though the human toll of Hussein's gas attacks had earned front-page news coverage. The White House took the position it did because it had decided to maintain friendly relations with its Gulf ally (and enemy of its enemy, Iran) and to advance the interests of U.S. farmers and manufacturers. It was wholeheartedly supported by most lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

With the end of the cold war and the apparent rebirth of the UN (aided by the obsolescence of the superpower veto), one might have expected a greater readiness to prevent genocide. But the pattern of nonintervention established in 1915 proved durable. In 1992, when Bosnian Serbs began systematically deporting and murdering Muslims and Croats in Bosnia, the United States and Europe decided not to intervene with air strikes to protect civilians. They also opted not to lift a UN arms embargo against the Muslims, even though they knew the measure froze in place a gross imbalance between the outgunned Muslims and their Serb foes, who had inherited the arsenal of the Yugoslav National Army. Britain, France, and the Netherlands responded to public pressure by contributing peacekeepers, but the United States refused to risk its troops to deliver food or protect people under siege. European and American political leaders were unanimous in their belief that they had "no dog" in the Balkan fight. When Bill Clinton assumed the Oval Office in 1993, he contested his predecessor's tendency to blame "all sides" for the violence, pointing out that the bulk of the atrocities were being committed by the Serbs. But he did not contest the prevalent policy of nonintervention. Fearing confrontation with his military, unsure of domestic political support, and determined to avoid "Americanizing" the war and endangering U.S. soldiers, Clinton avoided meaningful action. Some two hundred thousand people were killed in a three-and-a-half-year war.

THE GENOCIDE in Rwanda, which occurred in 1994, two years after the beginning of the Bosnian War, left some eight hundred thousand Tutsi and moderate Hutu murdered in one hundred days. France armed and diplomatically defended the genocidal government. Belgium, which contributed troops to a UN mission meant to help usher in Hutu-Tutsi power-sharing, yanked its troops out of Rwanda despite its detailed understanding of the pace and scope of the early massa-

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cres. The Clinton administration, burned by a UN mission gone bad in Somalia, kept U.S. troops far from the scene of the crime. But, more egregiously, despite knowing that Tutsi were being systematically murdered, the Clinton team demanded that the full UN mission be withdrawn from Rwanda and then resisted U.S. involvement of even the mildest form. Senior U.S. officials wanted to reduce the likelihood of eventually being drawn into Africa, and they sought to show a U.S. Congress skeptical of the UN that they had toughened up their approach to peacekeeping and learned, in the president's words, "to say 'no.'" Just as they had done during the Bosnia War, U.S. and European officials went out of their way to avoid branding the carnage "genocide." This was partly out of fear of triggering their obligations under the Genocide Convention, but mainly it was to avoid the moral stigma associated with allowing what Lemkin described as "the ultimate crime."

In sum, the United States and its European allies have wholeheartedly endorsed the pledge of "never again," while tolerating unspeakable atrocities that have been committed in clear view. The personalities, ideologies, and geopolitical constraints have shifted with time, but the major powers have consistently refused to take risks to suppress genocide. Whatever the growth in public awareness of the Holocaust and the triumphalism about the ascent of liberal democratic values, the last decade of the twentieth century was one of the most deadly in the grimmest century on record.

Genocide occurred after the cold war, after the growth of human rights groups, after the explosion of instant communications, and after the erection of the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. Perversely, public awareness of the Holocaust often seemed to set the bar for concern so high that citizens and statesmen were able to tell themselves that contemporary genocides were not measuring up. As the writer David Rieff once noted, "never again" might best be defined as, "Never again would Germans kill Jews in Europe in the 1940s." Either by averting their eyes or attending to more pressing conventional strategic and political concerns, Western leaders have repeatedly denounced the Holocaust and allowed genocide.

What is most shocking about the reaction of what Lemkin called the "civilized world" to these twentieth-century genocides is not that the Western powers did not deploy their ground forces to combat the atrocities, but that they did little along a continuum of intervention—from the merely rhetorical to the aggressively military—to deter the crime. Because their "vital national interests" were not considered imperiled by mere genocide, military intervention was rarely even considered. But because it was not considered, high-level officials in the United States and Europe often were not involved in debating alternate policy options. Instead of giving genocide the moral attention it warranted and at least vigilantly denouncing the perpetrators, Western governments repeatedly trusted in negotiation, clung to diplomatic niceties and neutrality, and shipped humanitarian aid.

Indeed, on occasion, the Western powers directly or indirectly aided those committing genocide. Beginning in 1979 and continuing throughout the 1980s, the United States orchestrated the vote at the UN to favor maintaining recognition of the Khmer Rouge. The Western powers sided with and supplied credits, military intelligence, and arms to Iraq while Hussein was attempting to wipe out Iraqi Kurds. The major powers used their clout on the UN Security Council to mandate the withdrawal of UN peacekeepers from Rwanda and to block the deployment of reinforcements. They maintained an arms embargo against the Bosnian Muslims even after it was clear that the arms ban prevented the Muslims from defending themselves. And they made promises to the people of Srebrenica and Rwanda they did not intend to keep.

NEARLY A CENTURY after the "race murder" of the Armenians and more than a half century after the liberation of the Nazi death camps, the crucial question is, why do decent men and women who firmly believe genocide should "never again" be permitted allow it to happen? The most typical response throughout the twentieth century was, "We didn't know." But this is simply untrue. To be sure, the information emanating

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from countries victimized by genocide was imperfect. Embassy personnel were withdrawn, intelligence assets on the ground were scarce, editors were typically reluctant to assign their reporters to places where neither Western interests nor Western readers were engaged, and journalists who attempted to report the atrocities were limited in their mobility. As a result, refugee claims were difficult to confirm and body counts notoriously hard to establish. Because genocide is usually veiled beneath the cover of war, when the killing began, some Western officials had genuine difficulty initially distinguishing genocide from conventional conflict.

But although Western governments did not know all there was to know about the nature and scale of the violence, they knew plenty. Well-connected ambassadors and junior intelligence analysts pumped a steady stream of information up the chain to senior decision makers—both early warnings ahead of genocide and vivid documentation during it. Much of the best intelligence appeared in the morning papers. Back in 1915, when communications were far more primitive, the *New York Times* managed 145 stories about the Turkish massacre of Armenians. During the Holocaust, though stories on the extermination of the Jews were not given anywhere near the prominence they warranted, they did regularly appear. In 1994, the *Times* reported just four days after the beginning of the Rwanda genocide that "tens of thousands" of Rwandans had already been murdered. It devoted more column inches to the horrors of Bosnia between 1992 and 1995 than it did to any other single foreign story.

With advances in technology and in the monitoring of human rights groups, Western leaders have begun relying on a second claim: "We didn't fully appreciate." This President Clinton said in an apology delivered in Rwanda four years after the genocide: "We did not fully appreciate the depth and the speed of the unimaginable terror which engulfed you." This claim, too, is misleading. It is true that the atrocities that were known remained abstract and remote, rarely acquiring the status of knee-buckling knowledge among ordinary citizens. Because the savagery of genocide so defied our everyday experience, many of us failed to comprehend what we had never experienced firsthand. Armenian, Jewish, Cambodian, Tutsi, Bosnian, and other survivors and witnesses have had trouble making "the unbelievable believable." The bystanders were thus able to inhabit what one Protestant theologian in the Second World War called the "twilight between knowing and not knowing."

But we must take responsibility for our incredulity. The Holocaust is too present in Western schoolbooks and culture today for genocide to be "unimaginable." We should have learned far sooner to trust even those accounts that could not be independently verified. The stories that emerge from genocidal societies are, by definition, "incredible." Case after case of wishful thinking debunked should have led us to shift the burden of proof away from the harried refugees and to the doubting skeptics who should be required to offer persuasive reasons for disputing refugee claims. A bias toward belief would do less harm than a bias toward disbelief. Instead of aggressively hunting for knowledge or publicizing what was already known, Western officials took shelter in the fog of plausible deniability. In the face of genocide, the search for certainty frequently became an excuse for paralysis and postponement. In most cases of genocide, those who "did not know" or "did not appreciate" chose not to do so.

THE SECOND consoling response usually offered to the question of why the major powers did so little to stop genocide is that any intervention would have been futile. Each time states began slaughtering and deporting their citizens, Western officials claimed that the proposed measures would do little to stem the horrors, or that they would do more harm than good. Usually they cited this lack of capacity to ameliorate suffering as a central reason for staying uninvolved. If the hatreds were "age-old" and "two-sided," as was usually claimed, and if the "parties" had in fact been killing one another "for centuries," the implication was that they would kill one another for centuries more. Thus, there was little a well-meaning band of foreign do-gooders could achieve by meddling.

It is difficult, in retrospect, to ascertain

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what a determined diplomatic, economic, legal, or military intervention could have achieved or what it would have cost. All we do know is that the perpetrators of genocide were quick studies who were remarkably attuned both to the tactics of their predecessors and to the world's response. From their brutal forerunners, they picked up lessons in everything from dehumanizing their victims and deploying euphemisms to constructing concentration camps and covering their tracks. And from the outside world, they learned the lesson of impunity. The Turkish minister of the interior, Talaat Pasha, was aware that Sultan Abdul Hamid II had gotten away with murdering Armenians in 1895. In 1939 Hitler was emboldened by the fact that absolutely nobody "remembered the Armenians." Saddam Hussein noted the international community's relaxed response to his chemical weapons attacks against Iran and his bulldozing of Kurdish villages. He rightly assumed he would not be punished for using poison gases against the Kurds. Rwandan gunmen deliberately targeted the Belgian peacekeepers at the start of their genocide because they knew from the U.S. reaction to the deaths of eighteen U.S. soldiers in Somalia that the murder of Western troops would likely precipitate their withdrawal. The Bosnian Serbs publicly celebrated the Mogadishu casualties, knowing that they would never have to do battle with U.S. ground forces. Slobodan Milosevic saw that he got away with the brutal suppression of independence movements in Slovenia and Croatia and reasoned he would pay no price for doing the same in Bosnia and Kosovo. Because so many individual perpetrators were killing for the first time and deciding daily how far they would go, the United States and its European allies missed critical opportunities to try to deter them. When they ignored genocide around the world, the Western powers were not intending to "green light" the perpetrators. But because the killers told themselves they were doing the world a favor by "cleansing" the "undesirables," some surely interpreted silence as consent or even support.

Although it is impossible to know the impact of steps never taken, the best testament to what the Western powers might have achieved is what they did achieve. For all the talk of the futility of foreign involvement, in the rare instances that the United States and its allies took even small steps, they appear to have saved lives. After Senator Pell's sanctions effort forced a reluctant Reagan White House to condemn Saddam Hussein's gas attacks, the Iraqi dictator did not again use gas against the Kurds. In 1991, after the appeals of Turkey and the personal encounter of U.S. Secretary of State James Baker with Kurdish refugees, the allies succeeded in creating a safe haven for the Kurds in northern Iraq, enabling more than a million Kurds to return to their homes. On a smaller scale, a Rwandan hotel owner credits the mere phone calls of a U.S. diplomat with deterring militias from attacking Tutsi inhabitants of his hotel during the genocide. The 503 UN peacekeepers who remained in Rwanda throughout the genocide protected some 25,000 Rwandans. NATO bombing in Bosnia, when it finally came, rapidly brought that three-and-a-half-year war to a close. Although imperfect, NATO bombing in Kosovo in 1999 liberated 1.7 million Albanians from tyrannical Serb rule. And a handful of NATO arrests in the former Yugoslavia has caused dozens of suspected war criminals to turn themselves in to the UN war crimes tribunal. One cannot assume that every measure proposed would have been effective, but there is no doubt that even these small and tardy steps saved hundreds of thousands of lives. If the Western powers had made genocide prevention a priority, they could have saved countless more.

THE REAL REASON the United States and the European states did not do what they could and should have done to stop genocide was not a lack of knowledge or a lack of capacity, but a lack of will. Simply put, Western leaders did not act because they did not want to. They believed that genocide was wrong, but they were not prepared to invest the military, financial, diplomatic, or domestic political capital needed to stop it. The policies crafted in response to each of the major genocides of the twentieth century were not the accidental products of neglect. They were concrete choices made by the world's most influential decision makers after implicit and ex-

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plicit weighing of costs and benefits. One of the most important and reluctant conclusions one must reach is that the record of the "civilized" world is not one of failure. It is one of "success." The system worked.

To illuminate this point, let us look specifically at the goals of policy makers in the United States. The European responses have either tended to be driven by similar motivations as those of U.S. decision makers or the European allies have directly followed the U.S. lead. From the Armenia genocide forward, U.S. policy makers in the executive branch (usually with the passive backing of most members of Congress) have had two objectives. First, they wanted to avoid engagement in conflicts that posed little threat to American interests, narrowly defined. Second, they hoped to contain the political costs and avoid the moral stigma associated with allowing genocide. By and large, they achieved both aims. In order to contain the political fallout, U.S. officials overemphasized the ambiguity of the facts. They played up the likely downsides of any proposed intervention. They steadfastly avoided use of the word "genocide," which they believed carried with it legal and moral (and thus political) imperatives to act. And they took solace in the normal operations of the foreign-policy bureaucracy, which permitted an illusion of continual deliberation, complex activity, and intense concern.

To understand why the United States did not do more to stem genocide, of course, it is not enough to focus on the actions of American presidents or their foreign-policy teams. In a democracy, even an administration disinclined to act can be pressured into doing so. This pressure can come from inside and outside. Bureaucrats within the system who grasp the stakes can patiently lobby or brazenly agitate in the hope of forcing their bosses to entertain a full range of options. Unfortunately, while every genocide generated some activism within the U.S. foreign-policy establishment, U.S. civil and foreign servants typically heeded what they took to be presidential indifference and public apathy. They assumed U.S. policy was immutable, that their concerns were already understood by their bosses, and that speaking (or walking) out would only reduce their capacity to improve the policy.

But the main reason American leaders can persist in turning away is that genocide in distant lands has not captivated American Senators, congressional caucuses, Washington lobbyists, elite opinion shapers, grassroots groups, and individual constituents. The battle to stop genocide has thus been repeatedly lost in the realm of domestic politics. Although isolated voices have protested the atrocities, Americans outside the executive branch were largely mute when it mattered. As a result of this society-wide silence, officials at all levels of government calculated that the political costs of getting involved in genocide prevention far exceeded the costs of remaining uninvolved.

Here, the exception that proved the rule was the NATO air campaign in Bosnia. Bosnia was the only genocide of the twentieth century that generated a wave of resignations from the U.S. government. It is probably not coincidental that this was the one case where the protests of American officials in the foreign service were legitimated daily by sustained public and press activism outside Foggy Bottom. NATO intervened with a heavy barrage of bombing in August 1995, when its assessment of the costs of intervening was lowered by the Croatian Army's rout of Serb forces, and when its assessment of the costs of *not* intervening was raised by the U.S. Congress's vote to unilaterally lift the arms embargo against the Bosnian Muslims. The lifting of the embargo embarrassed Clinton at home because foreign policy was being made on Capitol Hill by a future presidential challenger, Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole. It also made it likely that European governments were going to pull their peacekeepers out of the Balkans, which would have required U.S. troop participation in a potentially bloody and certainly humiliating rescue mission. This scenario was one that President Clinton wanted to avoid on the eve of his bid for reelection.

With foreign policy crises all over the world implicating more traditional U.S. interests, the slaughter of civilians will rarely secure top-level attention on its own merits. It takes political pressure to put genocide "on the map" in Wash-

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ington or in any of the European capitals. When Alison des Forges of Human Rights Watch met with National Security Adviser Anthony Lake two weeks into the Rwanda genocide, he informed her that the phones were not ringing. "Make more noise!" he urged. Because so little noise has been made about genocide, U.S. officials have opposed American intervention, firmly convinced that they were doing all they could—and, most important, all they should—in light of competing American interests and a highly circumscribed understanding of what was domestically "possible."

Although U.S. officials have sometimes expressed remorse after genocide, none fear professional accountability for their sins of omission. In the 1970s, Senate hearings on Capitol Hill documented abuses committed by America and its cold war allies in Latin America, southeast Asia, and elsewhere. As a result of this public reckoning and some of the formal checks instituted in its wake, U.S. foreign policy decision makers now fear repercussions for their sins of commission—for decisions they make and policies they shape that go wrong. But while everyone within the U.S. government has the incentive to avoid "another Somalia" or "another Vietnam," few think twice about playing a role in allowing "another Rwanda."

Other countries and institutions whose personnel were actually present when genocide was committed have been forced to be more introspective. The Netherlands, France, and the UN have each staged inquiries into their responsibility for the fall of Srebrenica and the massacres that followed. The inquiries did not lead to any notable political reforms, but they at least "named names," which might affect the behavior of bureaucrats the next time around. The United States has not looked back. When the UN's Srebrenica investigators approached the U.S. mission in New York for assistance, their phone calls were not returned. In the end, the UN team was forbidden from making any independent contact with U.S. government employees. The investigators were granted access to a group of hand-picked junior and mid-level officials who knew or revealed next to nothing about what the United States knew during the Srebrenica slaughter.

The French, the Belgians, the UN, and the Organization for African Unity have undertaken investigations on the Rwanda genocide. But in the United States, when Cynthia McKinney and Donald Payne, two disgruntled members of the Congressional Black Caucus (which was itself quiet during the 1994 massacres), attempted to stage hearings on the U.S. role, they were rebuffed. Two officials in the Clinton administration, one at the National Security Council, the other at the State Department, conducted internal studies on the administration's response to the Rwanda genocide. But they examined only the paper trail and did not publicly disclose their findings. What is needed are congressional inquiries with the power to subpoena documents and U.S. officials of all ranks and roles in the executive and legislative branches. Without meaningful disclosure, public awareness, and official shame, it is hard to imagine the U.S. response improving the next time around.

The September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States may have permanently altered U.S. foreign policy. The hope is that the attacks will make Americans inside and outside government more capable of imagining evil committed against innocent civilians. The fanatics targeting America resemble the perpetrators of genocide in their espousal of collective responsibility of the most savage kind. They attack civilians not because of anything the unwitting targets do personally, but because of who they are. To earn a death sentence, it was enough in the last century to be an Armenian, a Jew, or a Tutsi. On September 11, it was enough to be an American. Instead of causing Americans to retreat from global humanitarian engagement, the terrorist attacks could cause us to empathize with peoples victimized by genocide. In 1994, Rwanda, a country of eight million, experienced the equivalent of more than two World Trade Center attacks every single day for a hundred days. This was the proportional equivalent of two hundred and thirty thousand Americans killed each day, or twenty-three million Americans murdered in three months. When, on September 12, 2001, the United States turned for help to America's allies around the world, Americans were grati-

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fied by the overwhelming response. When the Tutsi cried out, by contrast, every country in the world turned away.

The fear, after September 11, is that the United States will view genocide prevention as a luxury it cannot afford as it sets out to better protect Americans. Some are now arguing, understandably, that fighting terrorism requires husbanding America's resources and avoiding "social work" such as humanitarian intervention, which is said to harm U.S. "readiness." Many believe that NATO's 1999 intervention in Kosovo and the current trial of Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic, which were once thought to mark important precedents, will in fact represent high-water marks for genocide prevention and punishment.

Without U.S. leadership, the last century showed, others will be unwilling to step forward to act, and genocide will continue. If the United States treats the war on terrorism as a war that can be prosecuted in a vacuum, with no regard for *genocidal* terror, it will be making a colossal mistake. There are two main reasons that the United States and its European allies should stop genocide. The first and most convincing reason is moral. When innocent life is being taken on such a scale and the United States and its allies have the power to stop the killing at reasonable risk, they have a duty to act. It is this belief that motivates most of those who seek intervention. But foreign policy is not driven by morality; it is driven by interests, narrowly defined. And history has shown that the suffering of victims has rarely been sufficient to spark a Western intervention.

The second reason for acting is the threat genocide in fact does pose to Western interests. Allowing genocide undermines regional and international stability, creates militarized refugees, and signals dictators that hate and murder are permissible tools of statecraft. Because these dangers to national interests are long-term dangers and not immediately apparent, however, they have rarely convinced top Western policy makers. Genocide has undermined regional stability, but the regions the conflicts destabilized tended also to lie outside the U.S. and European spheres of concern. Refugees have been militarized, but they tended not to wash up on America's shores. A key reason European leaders were more engaged in the Balkans in the 1990s than their American counterparts was that Bosnian refugees did land in Britain, France, and Germany. But generally dictators recognized that, provided the spillover costs were contained locally, their treatment of their own citizens would have little impact on Western leaders' perception of their country's military or economic security. Thus intervention only came about on the rare occasions when the shorter term political interests of Western policy makers were triggered.

American leadership remains essential for mobilizing local, regional, and international responses to genocide. But if it was difficult before September 11 to get U.S. decision makers to see the long term costs of allowing genocide, it will be even harder today when U.S. security needs are so acute. Nonetheless, the record shows that trying to build walls around genocidal societies almost guarantees trouble down the road. American security and security for Americans abroad is contingent on international stability, and there is perhaps no greater source of havoc than a group of well-armed extremists bent on wiping out a people on ethnic, national, or religious grounds.

States that murder and torment their own citizens almost inevitably target citizens elsewhere. Their appetites become insatiable. Hitler began by persecuting his own people and then expanded his campaign to the rest of Europe and, in time, the United States. Saddam Hussein wiped out rural Kurdish life and then turned on Kuwait, sending his genocidal henchman Ali Hassan al-Majid to govern the newly occupied country. The United States now has reason to fear that the poisonous potions Hussein tried out on the Kurds will be used next against Americans. Milosevic took his wars from Slovenia and Croatia to Bosnia and then Kosovo. The United States and its European allies are still paying for their earlier neglect of the Balkans by having to grapple with mounting violence in Macedonia that threatens the stability of southeastern Europe.

Citizens victimized by genocide or abandoned by the international community do not

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make good neighbors, as their thirst for vengeance, their irredentism, and their acceptance of violence as a means of generating change can turn them into future threats. In Bosnia, where the United States and Europe maintained an arms embargo against the Muslims, extremist Islamic fighters and proselytizers eventually turned up to offer succor. Some secular Muslim citizens became radicalized by the partnership, and the failed state of Bosnia became a haven for Islamic terrorists shunned elsewhere in the world. It appears that one of the organizations that infiltrated Bosnia in its hour of need and used it as a training base was Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda. And however high the number of Islamic radicals that were imported during or created by the Serb slaughter of Bosnia's Muslims, the figure would have been exponentially higher if the United States and its allies had allowed the killing to continue past 1995. The current Bosnian government, one legacy of the U.S.-brokered Dayton Peace Agreement, is far from perfect, but it is at least a strategic partner in the war against terrorism. Without NATO bombing and U.S. diplomatic leadership, that same Bosnian government might today be an American foe.

For the foreseeable future, it will be up to the United States to take the lead in stopping and punishing genocide. Clearly, the United States does not have the resources to simultaneously defend itself from attack and deploy its troops to every trouble spot where the threat of ethnic violence lurks. It must be extremely cautious about deploying U.S. forces abroad. But U.S. policy options should not be framed in terms of doing nothing or sending in the marines. There will be times when the magnitude of the moral harm will demand risking U.S. military force. There will also be times when, owing to America's past dealings in the region, U.S. intervention will be singularly inappropriate. There will be times when the risk to U.S. soldiers will outweigh the benefits a military intervention would likely bring to the victims. There will be times when even a good-faith presidential effort to convince the American people of the value of intervening will fail to create a political constituency for U.S. military action.

But in such circumstances, just because the United States might not deploy its troops, it does not mean that a U.S. leadership role is not required or that other forms of intervention should not be tried. U.S. officials must focus less on avoiding embarrassing the United States and more on accurately diagnosing and treating the atrocities underway. Deliberately calling genocide something it is not—"civil war" or "tribal violence"—in order to mute public pressure is not only dishonest; it is detrimental to sound policy. Handling atrocity as war has led to the deployment of conflict resolution experts, the misguided pursuit of ceasefires, and the spiraling investment in "peace processes" that too often become stalling devices that shield murder. Frankly labeling something genocide would build public support for using U.S. military force.

Instead of regarding intervention as an all-or-nothing proposition, the United States and its allies should respond to genocide by publicly identifying and threatening its perpetrators with prosecution, demanding the expulsion of representatives of genocidal regimes from international institutions such as the United Nations, closing the perpetrators' embassies in Western capitals, and calling upon countries aligned with the perpetrators to ask them to use their influence. Depending on the circumstances, Western powers might establish economic sanctions or freeze foreign assets, impose an arms embargo, or, if warranted, lift an arms embargo. They might use their technical resources to jam inflammatory radio or television broadcasts that are essential to propaganda, panic, and hate. They might set up safe areas to house refugees and civilians, and enforce them with well-armed and robustly mandated peacekeepers, air power, or both.

Genocide prevention is an immense burden and one that must be shared. But even if U.S. troops stay home, American leadership will be indispensable in assembling "coalitions of the willing" to deploy ground troops, in encouraging U.S. allies to step up their capacities, and in strengthening regional and international institutions that might eventually carry more of the weight.

For most of the second half of the twentieth century, the existence of the Genocide

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Convention appeared to achieve little. The United States did not ratify the Convention for forty years. Those countries that did ratify it never invoked it to stop or punish genocide. And instead of making Western policy makers more inclined to stop genocide, ratification seemed only to make them more reluctant to use the "g-word." Still, Lemkin's coinage has done more good than harm. It is unlikely that the international tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda or the future International Criminal Court would have come into existence without the Convention's passage. The punishment that takes place at these courts will help deter genocide in the long term. But more fundamentally, without the existence of the Convention, or Lemkin's proselytizing around it, the word genocide would not carry the moral stigma it has acquired. Hope for enforcement of the Genocide Convention lies in the stigma associated with committing *and allowing* the crime of genocide—and paradoxically in the lengths to which Western policy makers have gone to vow never again to allow genocide and the comparable lengths to which they have gone, while allowing it, to deny its occurrence.

Because it is unlikely that Western leaders will have the vision to recognize that they endanger their countries' long-term vital national interests by allowing genocide, the most realistic hope for combating it lies in the rest of us creating short-term political costs for those who do nothing. ●

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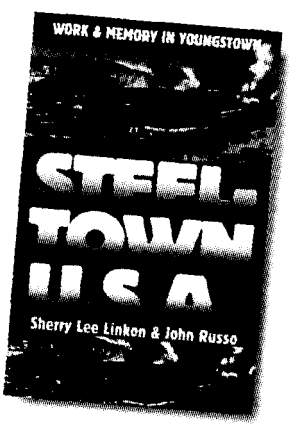

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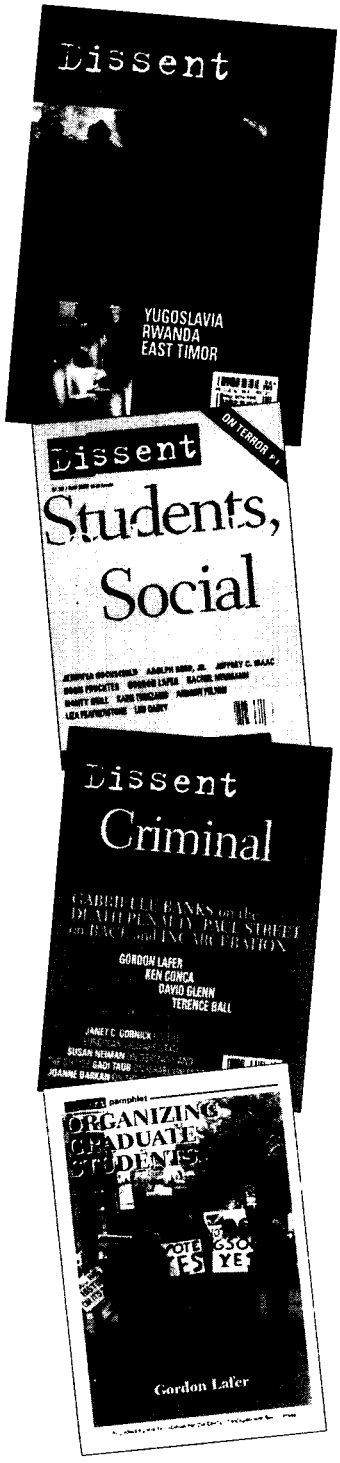

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'It Is Not Over Yet'

Keith Gessen

VICTOR SERGE:
THE COURSE IS SET ON HOPE
by Susan Weissman
Verso, 2001 364 pp $35

IN THE MONTHS after the Nazi invasion of France, while hoping for an exit visa but expecting Stalin's henchmen, Victor Serge managed to write some parts of a novel. "Not, however," he assures us, "from any love of literature." There were other reasons. For his work in the Berlin outpost of the Comintern, the Gestapo might have liked to speak with Serge; for his fearless denunciations of Stalin, the NKVD would have liked to silence him. "A man ends by concentrating a certain unique clarity in himself, a certain irreplaceable experience," one character explains on the eve of his arrest in *The Case of Comrade Tulayev,* the novel Serge was then writing. How many people on earth understand Einstein—and if they were shot? "It would all be over for a century or two—or three, how do we know? A whole vision of the universe would vanish into nothingness."

Thus the need to write, even when life pressed powerful claims. "Others, less engaged in combat, would perfect a style," he explained in his *Memoirs of a Revolutionary,* "but what I had to tell, *they* could not tell." Serge could tell a great deal—it was that kind of life. Born in Belgium in 1890 to Russian exiles—their bare home in Brussels covered with pictures of revolutionaries who'd been hanged—he became an anarchist newspaper editor in Paris, spent five years in prison, worked for insurrection in Spain in 1917, and then rushed to the "vaster insurrection" taking place in Russia. On the way there, in the waiting room of the Russian Embassy in Paris, he met a fiery monarchist, also heading for Russia, and in the great tradition of that country they immediately began arguing, confessing, and pacing up and down. The man turned out to be Nikolai Gumilev, the husband of Anna Akhmatova and himself an important poet. "In 1921," Serge recalled, "I was to struggle vainly for several days, trying to stop the Cheka [All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage] from shooting him." Gumilev was the first major writer killed by the Bolsheviks; Serge would meet many more.

He arrived in Petrograd in January 1919. The city was a shambles—the factories had ceased operation, the streets were lined with frozen excrement, and the people were burning precious housing stock for fuel. The bureaucracy had already become a menace: "I witnessed members of government driven to telephoning Lenin to obtain a railway ticket or a room in the [official] hotel." Serge canvassed opinion among anarchists and socialists. He found the Mensheviks "intelligent, honest and devoted to Socialism, but completely overtaken by events. . . .Every conversation I had with them convinced me that, face to face with the ruthlessness of history, they were wrong." When Maxim Gorky, the dean of Russian letters, offered him a post at his Menshevized publishing house, Serge recoiled. "My mind was made up. I was neither against the Bolsheviks nor neutral. I was with them." He joined the Party, was charged with organizing—under Grigory Zinoviev—the Third Communist International, and immediately began interceding for anarchists, Mensheviks, and whoever else found themselves in the Chekist maw. He also began writing what was in essence Bolshevik—not propaganda, exactly, but spirited—apologia, for a number of mostly French publications.

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Serge's work in the International soon took him to Berlin, where he sowed revolution, then to Vienna, where he befriended the intellectual giants of European communism. He returned to Russia in 1926 in hopes of supporting Trotsky's Left Opposition and reviving the moribund Party from within. Expelled instead, and briefly arrested, Serge began to write novels, in French. In 1933, he was arrested again and exiled to the distant city of Orenburg.

Luckily—and, as he well knew, thousands were not so lucky—Serge was a significant figure on the French left, which mobilized a campaign on his behalf. Though a delegation of Soviet writers in Paris refused to acknowledge his existence ("these," cried Serge in his memoirs, "my good colleagues of the Soviet Writers' Union!"), Stalin eventually, and much to his later regret, ordered his release in 1936. Refused a visa to several European countries, Serge ended up in Belgium. He began to tell the world about the Stalinist terror and the frame-up of the Moscow Trials, and was vilified for it in the communist press. His old friend Jacques Sadoul called him a "common criminal" in *l'Humanité* ("an exceptional article," said Trotsky, "even for that prostituted publication"). Eventually expelled from Belgium because of Soviet pressure, Serge found himself in Paris and then, finally, Mexico, where he would die in 1947—poor, isolated, and very soon forgotten.

Though his fame was in France, Serge's influence may have been greater here. He was a regular contributor to the golden-age *Partisan Review* and Dwight Macdonald's *Politics*. Edmund Wilson, then still at work on *To the Finland Station*, was deeply impressed by *Russia: Twenty Years After* (1937). "Serge taught us that one can hate Stalinist oppression," Lewis Coser wrote, "without becoming so imbued by hatred that one forgets the many evils of this world, seeing only one great evil." And this was dangerous—"Of one thing, anyway, I'm sure," Macdonald wrote him in 1945. "No American publisher will touch your [*Memoirs*] at present." No American publisher ever did, and in the years since his death one of the most important political writers of that era has just about disappeared. Serge is absent from the indexes of learned histories, slighted in discussions of the political novel. He memorialized so many of his contemporaries in his *Memoirs*; most of them were killed before they could return the favor. In Russia he is almost completely unknown.

Susan Weissman's *The Course is Set on Hope*, the first attempt at anything like a book-length biography of Serge, is meant to mitigate this neglect. It is, unfortunately, a disappointing work. Weissman is an inelegant writer, which sometimes leads her into a very un-Sergean slandering of the dead. The book displays a crude contempt for the Bolsheviks' opponents; "all" the White Russian groups in Paris are said to have been "delighted" by Stalin's terror, and in what is otherwise the book's strongest section, on Serge in France in the late 1930s, "Maria" Tsvetaeva is enlisted into the service of the NKVD. This is especially cruel: Marina Tsvetaeva, a wonderful poet who committed suicide in 1941 in utter agony, starvation, and despair, had a tough enough time of it without the next generation of Trotskyists believing she was Stalin's secret agent.

There are more serious errors, too. Politically, Weissman is a Trotskyist with a slight Sergist deviation. So although she is highly critical (with Trotsky) of Stalinist incompetence and opportunism and (with Serge) of political terror, she mostly blames the "counter-revolution"—a wonderful term that encompasses General Denikin, Stalin, the world bourgeoisie, and the social democrats. According to Weissman, the Bolsheviks did not monopolize power—they kept up a "lively and creative" dialogue with the other socialist parties for as long as was possible. And this idea—of an early Bolshevik innocence corrupted by outside forces—is at the core of a refusal (only partly shared by Serge) to peer into the dark heart of violent revolution; in practice it suggests that a great historical do-over might be in order. To believe this you must skip over uncomfortable facts, and Weissman does. She knows her Yevgeny Preobrazhensky instead of her Constituent Assembly—and what doth it profit a writer to have studied primitive socialist accumulation if she does not mention even in passing the dispersal of a democratically elected

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convention that incidentally consisted—since the liberals were already outlawed—exclusively of socialists? Weissman wishes to present Serge as a democratic Marxist, to argue that it is socialism, not capitalism, that is the natural partner of democracy, and this is a worthy project; but it is undermined by Weissman's own lack of commitment to the history of Russian democracy. When, on January 5, 1918, Bolshevik troops cut short an unarmed and peaceful demonstration in support of the Constituent Assembly by firing upon it, this may have been "lively," but it was not creative.

Mostly, though, *The Course is Set on Hope* reveals how little we learn of Serge by stacking up his position papers. When she is not paraphrasing his memoirs, Weissman dutifully introduces the Serge viewpoint into the great debates of early Soviet history—Serge on the Cheka, Serge on Kronstadt, the New Economic Policy, the Canton uprising of 1927. This is the wrong tack. Serge may have been the first to describe the Soviet Union as "totalitarian," but he knew just how small a consolation this was to the victims: "'Totalitarianism' did not yet exist as a word [in 1921]; as an actuality it began to press hard on us." And here is Weissman: "Serge finally defined the Soviet state as 'bureaucratic totalitarian with collectivist leanings.' His use of the term totalitarian was different from the later totalitarian school of analysis just as his usage of bureaucratic and collectivist differed from the 'bureaucratic collectivist' school." Perhaps. And this sort of analysis can be useful in a discussion of actually existing states. But the Soviet Union is dead. Weissman therefore finds herself in the impossible position of having to resurrect ancient, intricate arguments about events her readers can no longer be expected even to know about.

Though Serge has proved resistant to resurrection, he is still worth the trouble—but as a portraitist of terror and resistance, not as the source for a political program.

Serge had no illusions about the revolution. "Choking with joy," he writes of his arrival in Soviet Russia in 1919, "we shouted 'Greetings, Comrade!' to a Red sentry; he nodded, and then asked if we had any food." Serge is fully aware of the irony: between their "choking with joy" and the soldier's laconic nod lies a vast chasm of future disappointment. It's the sort of moment that recurs throughout Serge's work, and it is recognizably modernist. But Serge is different, he refuses to stop at the ironic disjunction. The revolution, after all, is just fifteen months old, an infant. So did they have any food? "We had. Here, take it. The Revolution is hungry."

Weissman writes that Serge participated in three revolutions. In fact, he missed all three—he was in Barcelona for the failed July 1917 insurrection, but not for the more seriously failed one in August; he was in Germany in preparation for the 1923 uprising, but was sent to Vienna before it was crushed. To Russia he came, so to speak, as soon as he heard, but the glorious period had already passed. Despite this, or because of it, the revolution's degeneration became his great theme. Like an astronomer seeking the origin of the universe in the radiation of far-flung galaxies, Serge kept trying to figure out where it went wrong. Further and further back he went, from Stalin to Kronstadt to the birth of the Cheka (December 1917). It was a horrible disaster, and Serge was one of the first to say so. If he never quite made it back to the night of October 25, it was because, so far as he could tell, there was no other way.

Serge's searches did not win him many friends. After a public debate about Kronstadt, Trotsky declared him a bourgeois moralist. "Serge plays with the concept of revolution," said the Old Man, "writes poems about it, but is incapable of understanding it as it is." Weissman finds this "vicious," but Trotsky was right—Serge did not think of the revolution as he did. And yet in his way Serge saw it more clearly: by its failure he knew it. The brief portraits of revolutionaries of which the *Memoirs* consists catalogue this failure with a remarkable cumulative force.

Of Georg Lukács: "In him I saw a first-class brain which could have endowed Communism with a true intellectual greatness. . . .I was to meet him and his wife later, in 1928-29, in a Moscow street.... Although he was fairly well-disposed towards me, he did not care to shake my hand in a public place, since I was expelled

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and a known Oppositionist. He enjoyed a physical survival, and wrote short, spiritless articles in Comintern journals."

On Trotsky: "The end of his life was played out in loneliness. He often paced up and down in his study in Coyoácan talking to himself. . . . He would engage in discussions with Kamenev, who had been shot long before; he was often heard addressing him by name."

And the anecdotes! Ivan Smirnov, an old hero of the Civil War, is removed from his cabinet post; pleased, in a way, he goes down to the Labor Exchange, hoping to find work as an engineer. "Some snooty little official," Serge reports, "saw this tall, graying, bright-eyed innocent bending in front of his window, and writing on the form he had to fill in, under the heading Last Employment: 'People's Commissar for Posts and Telegraphs.'" The official called the Central Committee, and the job hopeful was promptly deported. There are dozens of stories like these in Serge's memoirs, and their endings are all very much alike. Ivan Smirnov would later appear on the dock alongside Kamenev and Zinoviev in the first of the Moscow Trials.

As a writer, Serge had set out to defy all bourgeois conventions. He wanted to depict the consciousness of entire cities, of social classes. His first two novels lack central characters entirely; his third, *Conquered City*, has characters, but it's hard to tell what's going on. By *Midnight in the Century* (1936-1939), perhaps Serge's most characteristic book, he has narrowed his focus to a few brave exiled Oppositionists. Things got to the point where Irving Howe could accuse *Tulayev* (1940-1942) of being too "stately," too much like the nineteenth-century bourgeois novel.

This was a capitulation, of sorts, and it could not have come easily to Serge. But it so happened that as he began to think of the revolution less in terms of historical forces and more in terms of the individual lives lost, his books became a sort of listing of the dead. As he says of meeting Raymond Lefebvre, a French socialist who had written a tome about the First World War with the excellent title *Revolution or Death!*: "He spoke for the survivors of a generation now lying buried in communal graves. We quickly became friends." Serge, too, watched a generation of men—in his estimation, the best of them—murdered by the revolution he had spent his life preparing. His *Tulayev* is filled with a very physical foreboding. "I have migraines that medicine has not yet named," says one old Bolshevik: "a little pain the color of fire fixes itself in the back of my neck." For Serge, nearly the worst aspect of the murders was their squalor. Of Vassily Chadayev, an old Bolshevik and Oppositionist murdered in 1928: "All I ever saw of him again were some dreadful photographs: the dumdum bullets, fired from sawed-off rifles, had harrowed his face and chest monstrously." Since his death was kept secret, he writes of another Oppositionist, it "did not even serve as an example." Serge dedicated *Midnight in the Century* to "the memory of Kurt Landau, Andrés Nin, Erwin Wolf, who disappeared in Barcelona and whose very death was stolen from us."

It's not all death and horror with Serge. He is often maudlin, sometimes silly. He tells of an episode at Orenburg, when he was approached by a sympathizer who suggested that he form an Oppositionist group. "I looked deep into his eyes," writes Serge, "and thought to myself: 'You, my friend, are an *agent provocateur*!'" At moments like these it almost feels as if Serge, far from being a hardened revolutionary, were still playing at one. It was in Orenburg, too, that Serge managed briefly to make a living by sending manuscripts to France via registered mail—the manuscripts disappeared into the censor's bureau, but the post office dutifully recompensed Serge for his losses. "This," writes Serge, "afforded me the income of a well-paid technician." His novels are permeated with a palpable warmth. In *Tulayev*, the imprisoned Bolshevik economist, Kiril Rublev—his mind otherwise filled with statistics, projections, corrections—imagines himself talking to his wife, Dora, after deciding to resist the interrogation. "Dora would be glad," he thinks. "She would say, 'I'm certain I won't survive you long, Kiril. Show me the way.'"

Kiril, as it happens, does not show the way—he capitulates. But the scene avoids sentimentality also because we know it is bubbling up from deep personal sorrow. Serge's own

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wife, Liuba, could not bear the strain of Stalin's Russia. "Every week the system devoured a new class of victim," writes Serge. "In this atmosphere my wife lost her reason." She was hospitalized, recovered a little, but "then the old story began again: bread-cards refused, denunciations, arrests, death-sentences demanded over all the loudspeakers at the street corners." This was 1931 or 1932. And yet it's a funny thing, the antibourgeois memoir. Serge writes of his wife with great tenderness, and he was buying sedatives one cold winter morning for "my poor invalid," as he called her, when he was himself arrested. But when he refers some time later to "my wife," the translator must insert a footnote to explain that this is Serge's *next* wife, Liuba having been placed, incurable, in a sanatorium in southern France. It is characteristic of Weissman's book that she does nothing to tell us more about a woman with whom Serge spent twenty years. This is a serious mistake for the biographer of a man who, during his lengthy list of Stalin's victims, apologizes when he forgets the name of Yakov Blumkin's secretary, who was shot in Odessa and whom Serge had never met. "[Leon] Sedov's recollection of this young man was full of warmth," writes Serge, "but my overburdened memory has let his name slip."

SERGE'S SYMPATHY—perhaps it extended too far. He was interested in everyone, over-generous in his characterizations (even ex-friend Sadoul receives a fair portrait in the memoirs). Trotsky was so confused by Serge's diverse contacts upon his release from the USSR that he began to wonder whether he might not be a Soviet agent. As a novelist, too, Serge was able to inhabit the most disparate personages. *Tulayev* ends with the NKVD interrogator Fleischman reading the final testament of the recently executed Rublev: "'You thought well, Rublev,' said Fleischman, and it made him feel a sort of pride." He closes the notebook—"so he would have closed the eyes of a dead man"—and seals it with wax, to be discovered, perhaps, by future generations.

This sympathy, this bizarre optimism, affects Serge's historical analysis as well, so that he sometimes seems to hold all positions simultaneously. As an apologist, he had mocked the people who thought one could simply waltz into the "free city of communism," with "no repression after the workers' victory, no revolutionary tribunals, no Cheka—above all, ye gods, no Cheka!" Later he would argue that the Cheka destroyed the revolution. And, unlike Trotsky and Bukharin, he felt keenly his own culpability (being so much slighter, it may have been easier to feel): "We wrote good books," says one of his characters, "we created ideological frameworks on mountains of statistics, observations, scientific findings—we did not suspect that we were passing through the magic gates of hell."

Apostasy, a complete Koestler-like abjuring of his past beliefs, might have bought Serge a pass through the magic gates of cold war superstardom and lent his life a nice narrative arc. He refused it. In a brief, powerful summary of his career in the *Memoirs*, Serge writes:

> I have undergone a little over ten years of various forms of captivity, agitated in seven countries, and written twenty books. I own nothing. On several occasions a press with a vast circulation has hurled filth at me because I spoke the truth. Behind us lies a victorious revolution gone astray, several abortive attempts at revolution, and massacres in so great a number as to inspire a certain dizziness. And to think that it is not over yet. Let me be done with this digression; those were the only roads possible for us. I have more confidence in mankind and in the future than ever before.

Wonderful stuff, but confidence in the future? When he wrote these lines, in 1943, Serge knew about the Nazi death camps; he believed that postwar Europe would be a quasi-totalitarian superstate; he was convinced that all communist insurgency movements were nothing more than pawns of the Kremlin. And he knew, especially on this last score, that he was partially to blame. Weissman makes Serge's optimism the centerpiece of her argument, and in a way she is right—it is unbelievable that someone who saw so clearly could avoid despair. Perhaps that really was the only road possible for "us"—an insistence, which bordered on the absurd, on the possibility of future regeneration.

And again, he had seen the revolution in swaddling clothes, and he could not forget it.

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"We have known how to win," he wrote in *Partisan Review* in 1942. "We have seen the generals, the ministers, the financiers and archbishops smile ingratiatingly and tremble before us. No predestination condemns us to be the victims of concentration camps—and as for the prison-torturers, we know quite well how people are put against a wall." This may have been violent wartime rhetoric, but Serge never knew any peace. He said impossibly contradictory things, and he said them incomparably well.

Nothing is ever lost, and events repeat themselves: we still have scribblers who lie, or avert their gaze, for the simple reason that it is easier to do so. We have apologists who call themselves realists, and an increasing number who do not feel it necessary to apologize at all. Serge is as unlikely now as ever; his tragic sense of the revolution as an action carried out by the best men in Europe is as disturbing. He did not excuse them or himself. No wonder Lukács refused to shake hands when they met on a Moscow street—Serge never washed his of anything. ●

KEITH GESSEN was the books columnist for www.feedmag.com.

Why Free-Trade Economists Fail to Persuade

Ian Robinson

FREE TRADE TODAY
by Jagdish Bhagwati
Princeton University Press, 2002 128 pp $24.95

FREE TRADE UNDER FIRE
by Douglas Irwin
Princeton University Press, 2002 248 pp $27.95

IN 1985, THE first few environmental organizations were beginning to look critically at the World Bank's road and dam projects. They had little interest in trade policy. Human rights and women's organizations likewise ignored trade agreements, focusing on authoritarian regimes and death squads. Organizations concerned with equitable development in the "Third World" tended to support trade liberalization, though most argued that this would be far from adequate for genuine economic development. The AFL-CIO had been opposing further trade liberalization since 1969, but it was the exception among labor federations in the global North. West European and Canadian trade unions supported the Tokyo Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), signed in 1979 and implemented over the next seven years. They did not begin to challenge the GATT until the Uruguay Round that created the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1994.

The first hint that something fundamentally new was afoot in trade politics was the unprecedented coalition of Canadian social movement organizations that mobilized to force a national election on the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement in 1988. The coalition was re-activated to challenge efforts to extend CUSFTA to Mexico under the North American Free Trade Agreement of 1993. NAFTA stimulated the formation of a similar coalition in the United States. A parallel network also formed in Mexico. In Western Europe, similar coalitions first emerged in resistance to some features of the European Union's Maastricht Treaty of 1992. These coalitions were re-energized and expanded when the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development sought to negotiate a Multilateral Agreement on Investment that would extend the essential features of NAFTA's investment chapter to the organization's thirty member countries and beyond. The multinational social movement mobilization against the MAI was one important

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reason why it was shelved in 1998. Thereafter, the effort to build an enforceable international regime of investor property rights shifted to the next round of WTO negotiations, scheduled to begin in Seattle in late November 1999.

The protests at the 1999 World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle marked a turning point in trade politics. The size and depth of the international coalition that came together to protest the WTO was striking. And then there were the television images and the stunning *dénouement*: Teamsters marching with "turtles," tear gas and police charges in the darkness, the collapse of the negotiations. The author of one of the books reviewed here, Jagdish Bhagwati, was in Seattle as an adviser to the WTO's director. While trying to get to the meeting, he found himself "confronting a tough Chinese Red Guards-style female demonstrator who was blocking my way illegally." A colleague then "drew me away from a confrontation that would surely have left me bloodied, saying, 'You are the foremost free trader today; we cannot afford to lose you!'" Bhagwati's story speaks to several things, including his considerable ego. Most important, though, it captures the embattled state in which mainstream trade economists loyal to free trade doctrines now believe they exist: "there are not too many out there, fighting the fight for free trade," Bhagwati worries, "We need to change that."

Bhagwati and Irwin write with passion and confidence about free trade. But they fear the emergence of a new protectionist coalition with political clout unprecedented since the Second World War. These books are essays in persuasion, written at what the authors (correctly, I think) regard as a critical moment in the evolution of U.S. and world trade policy.

The two books are very similar in their underlying assumptions. Both authors are mainstream trade economists. Irwin, in fact, was a student of Bhagwati's. The books differ, however, in focus and style. Bhagwati's book originated as three lectures delivered at the Stockholm School of Economics in 1998. Bhagwati defends free trade against critics who claim it adversely affects equality and economic growth. Irwin surveys the traditional arguments in favor of free trade and looks at how trade liberalization is likely to have an impact on jobs. He reviews the evolution of U.S. trade policy and examines the structure of the WTO. He defends recent WTO decisions striking down environmental regulations and argues against including labor standards in the WTO. Irwin's survey is useful for the newcomer to U.S. trade policy. Bhagwati is more appropriate for those with a more theoretical background and orientation.

ARE THESE BOOKS persuasive? I find them convincing on some issues. For example, Irwin makes a strong case that the U.S. trade deficit is a product of macroeconomic policies and increased international capital mobility, rather than the trade policies of the United States or its trading partners. I am also persuaded by his argument that the net job creation (or loss) associated with changes in trade policy is probably quite small. This suggests that we should focus more on the wage effects of trade liberalization (and increased international capital mobility), and less on the rival predictions of trade-induced job loss/creation that so dominated the debate over NAFTA.

However, Bhagwati and Irwin do not succeed in engaging the most important of the concerns that animate critics of NAFTA and the WTO, because they do not listen very carefully to what these critics have to say. I admit that this can be a daunting task. The movement is so large and diverse that one might despair of finding any underlying coherence to its criticisms. Still, I think that several things can be said that apply to most of the people and organizations at the center of this movement. We are not against globalization per se. Rather, we are critical of the particular kind of globalization that exists today, which we would characterize as free market or neoliberal. We think that it is possible to construct an alternative model of global economic regulation that will generate better outcomes for the bottom two-thirds of the world's people and for the global ecosystem, just as it has proven possible—and desirable—to construct national market economies along principles other than those of laissez-faire. We think that the global economy can be made more democratic by

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regulating international capital mobility and changing the decision-making processes of global institutions such as the WTO, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank.

Do Irwin and Bhagwati understand that this is what most of the critics believe? I'm afraid not. Both authors characterize the critics as "anti-globalization." Although this accurately describes some, it is not true for the majority. Both authors seem to think that the main reason critics are against globalization is that they are anticapitalist and antimarket. Irwin, for example, tells us that for many of these groups, "Free markets and capitalism are seen as embodying and furthering environmental destruction, male dominance, class oppression, racial intolerance and colonial exploitation." To characterize most environmental organizations, or most contemporary trade unions, as "anticapitalist" is absurd, if that means that they are committed to the abolition of capitalism. If the term means that they are *critical* of the way that capitalism currently operates, the characterization is accurate, but then the authors' summary dismissal of that position becomes puzzling. The critics insist that there are better and worse forms of market economy, that the neoliberal model of regulation toward which we are currently moving (one that expands property rights while ignoring human rights) is worse than feasible alternatives, and therefore, that the current model of global economic regulation can and ought to be changed. Unfortunately, Irwin and Bhagwati, by tilting at anticapitalist windmills, fail to join the real argument.

A second obstacle to engaging the critics persuasively is the authors' refusal to address economic globalization as a system. Bhagwati and Irwin want to focus exclusively on the free trade component of this larger system. Here is Bhagwati's backhanded rationale for this policy:

> For reasons that are difficult to fathom, the anti-globalization agitationists seem to think that globalization is some sort of gigantic blob of a concept or phenomenon where every element necessarily implies every other and that if you are for free trade, you must also be for free short-term capital flows, for free direct foreign investment, for free immigration, for free love, for free whatever!

Bhagwati is right that one does not have to support or oppose all of these things. But insofar as these things are tangled together, interacting with one another in a single global economic system, we have to concern ourselves with its logic (or lack thereof).

In their effort to extract free trade from the wider matrix of economic globalization, the authors downplay the degree to which trade deals such as NAFTA and the WTO shape the character of the larger economic system. For example, some of the most novel and important provisions in NAFTA and the WTO—pertaining to investor property rights and the deregulation of financial services—undoubtedly increase international capital mobility. Dani Rodrik has argued that increased international capital mobility could significantly increase the "price elasticity of the demand for labor." That is, firms will shift production to other countries in response to smaller and smaller differences in labor costs, other things being equal. This could dampen wage growth not only in the North, but in the South as well. Bhagwati and Irwin both devote considerable effort to exploring how free trade affects wages, yet neither so much as mentions Rodrik's well-known argument. Why not? Free capital mobility is one thing, Bhagwati says, free trade is another. He favors considerably less of the former than we have today, and much more of the latter. But while conceptually distinct, the fact is that both principles are promoted in NAFTA and the WTO. If we want to assess the impacts of these international agreements, we must consider how they affect capital mobility, and how it in turn affects workers, the environment, and so on. Slippage in the way the concept of "free trade" is employed permits Bhagwati and Irwin to evade this challenge.

Focusing narrowly on "free trade" also means that the interactions between trade liberalization (that is, reductions in tariffs and quotas at the border) and other aspects of the global economic system are ignored. For example, it is not unreasonable for Indian policy makers to look at how currency markets are

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working—including the risks that their currency will be devalued—when deciding whether to replace their long-standing policy of food self-sufficiency with one that relies on food imports in a liberalized agricultural trade regime. An important consideration will surely be whether India plans to eliminate its remaining capital controls, making its currency more vulnerable to currency trader panics. If such controls are eliminated, the argument for free trade in food becomes less persuasive because the potential costs—a large devaluation that leaves the country without the foreign reserves to meet the population's food needs—would be much greater, while the potential benefits would remain unchanged. A refusal to discuss the wider context shuts down discussion of such interaction effects. Another large swath of the critics' concerns is thus ruled out of bounds.

Even if we accept the narrow parameters within which the authors wish to assess the impacts of free trade, their discussions of the trade-and-wages issue is unpersuasive. This is a critical piece of their arguments, given the importance of wages for poverty and economic inequality. Once again, the authors are highly selective in the arguments that they choose to explore. Bhagwati acknowledges that, in theory, trade liberalization could result in falling wages for unskilled workers in the countries where labor is scarce, relative to the rest of the world—the North, for practical purposes. (In economics this is known as the Stolper-Samuelson theorem.) The causal mechanism is the lower prices that should obtain for labor-intensive commodities produced in labor-abundant countries and imported into the United States. These lower prices will force U.S. producers of the same goods to cut their prices to remain competitive, which will then force them to cut their wage levels. Bhagwati argues that the relative prices of labor-intensive imports actually rose in the 1980s, when the worst decline in real wages occurred. From this, he concludes that there is no evidence that free trade—narrowly construed to rule out of bounds Rodrik's argument about the impacts of international capital mobility—is an important cause of the falling real wages experienced by unskilled workers in the United States since the mid-seventies.

This conclusion is premature at best. To begin with, we cannot infer from the fact that consumer prices for such goods were rising that import prices were also rising. Higher consumer prices in the United States might simply mean that firms importing their clothing from abroad were marking up their prices more, and so reaping higher profits. If so, this would pressure firms producing domestically at lower profit rates to cut their costs, which is most effectively done by cutting wages in a labor-intensive industry. Even if these factors are not at work, the closing of union plants due to trade competition—think of the apparel, electronics, steel, and auto sectors—resulting in the loss of relatively high-paying union jobs for blue collar workers cannot be dismissed. The difference in wages between union and non-union blue collar workers doing the same jobs remained quite stable in the U.S. manufacturing sector throughout the 1970s and 1980s, but the share of the workforce belonging to unions diminished sharply. Plant closings, and decisions to invest in new, labor-saving production technologies—both of which were heightened by international competition—contributed to that decline, as did intensified employer resistance to union organizing efforts. The resistance was itself motivated in no small measure by the search for ways to cut production costs in the face of intensified international competition. It is surely misleading to tell readers that trade liberalization has no serious negative impact on the wages of unskilled workers without mentioning these causal pathways and making a serious effort to assess the magnitude of the effects along each of them.

IRWIN TAKES a different tack on the wage question, arguing that international variations in wage levels are largely determined by differences in labor productivity. It follows that the unit labor costs (that is, the labor cost of producing one unit of a good) of high-wage, high-productivity plants in the global North are similar to those of low-wage, low-productivity plants in the global South. The implication is that there is little downward pressure on the wages of high-productivity workers even in the

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traded sectors. Irwin offers national manufacturing sector data from sixty-three countries to support his claim that wages are largely determined by productivity, and on the surface this looks convincing. But the best test of his argument would be to compare plants with very similar productivity levels in high- and low-wage countries. After all, a particular U.S. plant does not compete with the average unit labor costs of the Mexican or the Chinese manufacturing sector. The unit labor costs that matter are those for the plants that compete directly with their own.

At the plant level, we find a different story from the one suggested by Irwin's aggregate data. Consider the Ford Focus plant in Hermosillo, Mexico, which I visited last February. This plant has productivity and quality levels very close to those of Ford's only other Focus plant, located in Michigan. Ford Hermosillo production workers were paid about $2.70 per hour. Harley Shaiken has documented the existence of many parallel cases in Mexico. His findings have been published for more than a decade, yet neither Bhagwati nor Irwin mentions this work. It is true that high-productivity, low-wage plants are not the norm in Mexico, where many of the plants built before trade liberalization are less productive, yet pay higher wages, than their *maquiladora* counterparts. These cases swamp those like the Ford Hermosillo plant in the aggregate national data. But high-productivity, low-wage plants are the trend "at the margin," because when low wages can be combined with high productivity and quality they result in unbeatable unit labor costs. As economists like to point out, what happens at the margin is enormously important. The reason that such combinations were seldom found in the past, despite their unparalleled competitive advantage, was that "developing" countries lacked sufficient domestic capital to build such plants in any significant number. But with dramatic increases in international capital mobility—a growing share of which entails transfers of capital from the North to the global South—this is no longer such a serious constraint.

That Bhagwati and Irwin ignore these potentially important counter-arguments to their analysis of trade and wages is not reassuring. This failure does not prove that they are wrong about the impact of trade liberalization on wages. But it does weaken their credibility as even-handed judges of the morally and politically loaded issues under discussion. This should not surprise us. They themselves tell us that they are advocates for free trade and that they are strongly committed to defeating arguments against it. It is to be expected that, in such a politically charged context, they will marshal their evidence more like lawyers than engineers coolly adding up the various stresses acting on a bridge. Those of us who have participated in the globalization debates have succumbed to this tendency all too often. That is why genuine engagement between those on different sides of these policy questions is essential. The books reviewed here take a few very small steps in that direction. As citizens who need to hear all of the relevant arguments before we make judgments about which policies to support, we need and deserve much more. ●

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A Turbulent Life

Scott Sherman

AMIRI BARAKA:
THE POLITICS AND ART
OF A BLACK INTELLECTUAL
by Jerry Gafio Watts
NYU Press, 2001 577 pp $37.95

In 1961, LeRoi Jones, a young writer in Greenwich Village, published a slim collection of brooding, introspective poems entitled *Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note.* "Each morning," Jones wrote, "I go down to Gansevoort Street and stand on the docks./I stare out at the horizon/until it gets up and comes to embrace me./I make believe it is my father./This is known as genealogy." But Jones's poems soon took on a darker cast; his second collection, *The Dead Lecturer* (1964), revealed a deepening preoccupation with violence and self-loathing: "I am inside someone/who hates me," Jones averred. "I look out from his eyes./Smell what fouled tunes come in to his breath./Love his wretched women."

The murder of Malcolm X in 1965 radicalized Jones. He jettisoned his Beat identity, left Greenwich Village for Harlem, and eventually changed his name to Amiri Baraka. Gone were the brooding poems of the early 1960s; black liberation was his new fixation. Jones's 1966 book, *Black Art,* began with a poem called "SOS": "Calling black people/Calling all black people, man woman child/Wherever you are, calling you, urgent, come in." If *Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note* was characterized by a creeping melancholy, *Black Art* was bursting with rage; it concluded with a poetic manifesto wherein Jones issued a call for "poems that kill," "assassin poems," poems that "wrestle cops into alleys/and take their weapons leaving them dead/with tongues pulled out and sent to Ireland."

From 1965 to 1974, Jones devoted himself to the black nationalist cause, mostly in Newark, New Jersey, but also on the national level with the short-lived Congress of Afrikan Peoples. But those efforts left him disillusioned, and in 1974 he abandoned black nationalism for the rigid Marxism he adheres to today. Jerry Gafio Watts recalls running into Baraka on the Yale campus in the early 1980s, when the latter was a visiting professor. An elderly white man strolled past them. "That's the old fascist Robert Penn Warren!" Baraka hissed. At the time, Yale's dining hall workers were on strike, and Watts was astonished to see Baraka pull a pack of Xeroxed leaflets from his satchel, which he distributed to workers and students. The leaflets read: "SUPPORT THE YALE DINING HALL WORKERS! CALL FOR GENERAL STRIKE! SMASH THE CAPITALIST STATE!"

From the Beat generation to black nationalism to socialist revolution: what a long, strange, incendiary trip it's been, one that has inspired reams of commentary and criticism. In his 1965 essay "New Styles in 'Leftism,'" Irving Howe dismissed Jones as a charlatan, "an adjunct of middle-class amusement," a "pop-art guerrilla warrior." But subsequent critics, many of whom are black, are rather more generous to Baraka. Arnold Rampersad, the biographer of Langston Hughes and Ralph Ellison, has proclaimed that Baraka "stands with Wheatley, Douglass, Dunbar, Hughes, Hurston, Wright and Ellison as one of the eight figures. . . who have significantly affected the course of African-American literary culture."

Jerry Gafio Watts's hefty new book is not, alas, a biography of Baraka. Watts calls it "one person's necessarily flawed, critical commentary on another's life and work." Flawed, one regrets to say, is the key word: Watts has written a flat, turgid book about a uniquely fasci-

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nating and disturbing individual, a book that hurls phrases like "demonic" and "pathetic" at its subject. But Baraka's political career—along with his massive, uneven oeuvre, which consists of more than thirty books of plays, essays, poetry, fiction, and autobiography—deserves more subtle treatment. The definitive study of him remains unwritten.

Everett LeRoy Jones was born in Newark, New Jersey, in 1934. His mother was a social worker; his father was a postal employee who subscribed to *Esquire*. Racial consciousness came to Jones at a young age. When he was thirteen, he devoured Richard Wright's *Black Boy*. Around the same time he saw a photograph of Emmett Till in *Jet* and was stunned by his "ruptured swollen horrible body." In the seventh grade, Jones visited the Bronx Zoo on a class trip, and lingered in the elephant house, where he came upon a white custodian. "Wow, how do you stand it in here?" Jones exclaimed, referring to "the terrible odor of elephant shit." "I don't mind it," the custodian retorted, "I live in Harlem." "Yeh, a white guy said this," Jones recalled in *The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones*, "and it went through me like a frozen knife."

Jones attended Howard University, but recoiled at its "stiffness and artificiality," its "petty bourgeois Negro mentality." Its integrationist mission nauseated him: "In coldly sociological terms, under national oppression, it was the Sisyphus myth given numbers to chart the exact degree of pain," he fumed in his *Autobiography*. "Or ants piling up tidbits of zero to build the Empire State Building and then not even own it."

In 1954, Jones dropped out and joined the Air Force. Shortly thereafter he found a copy of *Ulysses* "and suddenly understood that I didn't know a hell of a lot about anything." He eventually became the night librarian on his military base, where he immersed himself in Herman Melville and Gustave Flaubert, Marcel Proust and D.H. Lawrence, Buddhist texts, and the *Communist Manifesto*. An anonymous letter to his commanding officer accusing him of being a communist put an end to Jones's military career; among his sins was possession of a copy of *Partisan Review*. He was put on gardening duty, tending to the flowers on the base, and left the "error farce" shortly thereafter with a dishonorable discharge.

Jones arrived in Greenwich Village in early 1957 and took up residence in a tenement on East Third Street. Food and money were scarce, so he sometimes stole food from delicatessens: "My best shot was those nice barbecuing chickens they sit on the counter after taking them off the spit." Jones soon found a job in a record warehouse, which fueled his interest in black music and brought him into contact with writers such as Nat Hentoff and Martin Williams. Friendships also developed with Allen Ginsberg and Peter Orlovsky, Gilbert Sorrentino and Hubert Selby, Frank O'Hara and Larry Rivers. For the first time, Jones began to associate with white women. He had a girlfriend who lived below Houston Street and, in the mornings, he would pass her Italian neighbors on the stairway: "It seemed they were all scowling at me and so were the ones in the street."

In early 1960, Jones went to Cuba. "I was never the same again," he has written.

By 1964, he had achieved considerable notoriety, thanks to a steady stream of plays, essays, and poems ("What can I say?/It is better to have loved and lost/Than to put linoleum in your living rooms?"). Watts has little to say about this work; his method throughout is to summarize a book or play, toss in an opinion or two, and then quote the opinions of other Baraka scholars, primarily Werner Sollors, author of *Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones: The Quest for a 'Populist Modernism.'* But Jones's early work, much of which is dazzling, deserves more detailed treatment. In 1963, he published *Blues People*, a stirring treatise on Afro-American music. In 1964, Jones's explosive play *Dutchman* opened at the Cherry Lane Theater, and remained there for a year, solidifying his reputation in Greenwich Village. Writing in the *New York Herald Tribune's* Sunday supplement, Jones announced his arrival in an essay that evoked Norman Mailer's *Advertisements for Myself*:

> I write now, full of trepidation because I know the death this society intends for me. I see Jimmy Baldwin almost unable to write about himself anymore. I've seen Du Bois, Wright,

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> Chester Himes, driven away—Ellison silenced and fidgeting in some college. I think I almost feel the same forces massing against me, almost before I've begun. But let them understand that this is a fight without quarter, and I am very fast.

On February 21, 1965, Jones, dressed in his usual attire—cap, hunting jacket, round dark glasses—attended a reception at the Eighth Street Bookstore. A friend burst into the room, shouting and weeping: "Malcolm is dead! Malcolm's been killed!" Jones summoned his black friends into a corner, but they were too paralyzed by grief to heed his call, prompting his friend Joel Oppenheimer to quip: "That's the trouble with the black revolution. Roi's giving directions and nobody listens!" The assassination was a shock to Jones: "I felt stupid, ugly, useless," he later wrote. "Downtown in my mix-matched family"—he was married to Hettie Cohen—"and my maximum leader/teacher shot dead while we bullshitted and pretended." Jones responded to the assassination with livid verses:

> For all of him, and all of yourself, look up, black man,/quit stuttering and shuffling, look up,/black man, quit whining and stooping, for all of him,/For Great Malcolm a prince of the earth, let nothing in us rest/until we avenge ourselves for his death, stupid animals/that killed him, let us never breathe a pure breath if/we fail, and white men call us faggots till the end/of the earth.

In their newfound quest for authenticity, Jones and a small coterie of friends moved to Harlem, where they claimed a ramshackle brownstone on West 130th Street. The Black Arts Repertory Theater (BART) was born. Its goal? To "create an art that would be a weapon in the Black Liberation Movement." BART offered classes in poetry, history, painting, music, and martial arts. It staged concerts (black musicians only) in parks, vacant lots, playgrounds, and streets, with performances by John Coltrane, Sun Ra, Cecil Taylor, and Pharoah Sanders. Outdoor poetry readings, dance, drama—all of it was undertaken, with improvised stages, in Harlem in that hot summer of 1965. Jones himself would go on to become the preeminent figure in the Black Arts Movement of the late 1960s.

Watts's book purports to be about Jones's "life and work," but the author is content to skim the surface. He mostly ignores Jones's upbringing, his stint at Howard, his years in the military, and his Greenwich Village period. In short, Watts neglects his subject's cultural, political, and intellectual development. In the preface, Watts declares that "at no time have I tried to interview [Baraka] or any of his closest former associates." That was a mistake on Watts's part, because his text contains numerous speculations about Jones's behavior since 1960—speculations that might have been clarified by personal interviews with him. Consequently, Watts's limited research distorts his critical judgment. With regard to BART, for instance, he concludes that its impact in Harlem was "minuscule," but he also admits: "I have not surveyed the opinions and remembrances of black Harlemites concerning BART and Jones." Watts's lackluster treatment of Baraka's Harlem period is indicative of his overall method: by relying almost entirely on secondary sources, he brings forth little that is new and original; in too many places, his book feels like a textbook rather than a "critical commentary."

BART's end was near by late 1965. Funding came largely from the Great Society programs, but Jones was in no mood to cultivate white government bureaucrats. When Sargent Shriver, a top aide to Lyndon Johnson, attempted to tour BART's office, Jones barred him from the premises: "Later for them motherfuckers," he sneered. "Fuck Shriver!" Jones also directed his rage at Jews in a torrent of vile, anti-Semitic verses:

> Smile, jew. Dance, jew. Tell me you love me, jew. I got/something for you now though. I got something for you, like you dig,/I got. I got this thing, goes pulsating through black everything/universal meaning/I got the extermination blues, jewboys/I got the hitler syndrome figured.

Many years later, in his *Autobiography,* Baraka expressed regret over some—though certainly not all—of these transgressions: "We were all ideologically confused," he wrote in 1984. But BART's demise (and, for that matter, Baraka's own anti-Semitism) was not merely the result of "ideological confusion."

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From the start, in BART's case, the organization attracted thugs, and, when the money ran out, gangsterism ensued. Jones's collaborator Larry Neal was shot, and the brownstone was ransacked. Jones, fearing for his personal safety, fled to Newark. He had just completed a book called *Home*, whose introduction concluded with a boast: "By the time this book appears, I will be even blacker."

In Newark, Baraka stumbled upon a three-story wooden building, which he purchased and renovated. "Spirit House" was born. Baraka's mission remained the same: to "bring political ideas and revolutionary culture to the black masses of Newark." Concerts and plays proliferated, many of which featured neighborhood children. But Baraka soon fell under the influence of Ron Karenga, whose Kawaida doctrine—an African-oriented "philosophy" based largely on notions of polygamy, military discipline, and rote learning—appealed to his fiery cultural nationalism. Eventually, Baraka and his supporters would wear dashikis, and a cult of personality would develop around the Maximum Leader, one that included buttons with Baraka's photograph and official celebrations of his birthday. But the Kawaida influence also led to the creation of an alternative school, the Afrikan Free School, which Baraka claims as his proudest accomplishment and which Watts largely ignores. Still, Watts's book springs to life in the Newark phase, and his account of Baraka's hubris—Watts's primary theme—is damning.

Baraka immediately immersed himself in the life of black Newark. When riots shook the city in 1967, he was beaten by the police and jailed. For Baraka, the Newark "rebellion" was a heroic "cleansing fire." Yet, as Watts notes, he responded to it by deepening his involvement in local electoral politics. Jones spearheaded a campaign to break the back of Newark's corrupt white power structure by electing a black mayor, a campaign that drew such luminaries as Jesse Jackson and Harry Belafonte to the city. It was ultimately successful, and in 1970, Kenneth Gibson became Newark's first black mayor. For Baraka, the election had revolutionary implications: "We will nationalize the city's institutions," he wrote before the vote, "as if it were liberated territory in Zimbabwe or Angola."

It was not to be. Gibson, who needed Baraka's help to win, but not to govern, was weak and ineffective, and he quickly descended into mediocrity and, later, alleged criminality on fraud and conspiracy charges. In the early 1970s, Baraka was deeply involved in national efforts to build a viable black left—in 1972 he chaired the National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana—but he remained rooted in Newark, working, in a highly pragmatic manner, on numerous local projects. He and his followers tried to launch a cable television channel and a low-income housing project, for which they obtained six million dollars in state funding. But the housing project was scuttled by Gibson and local elites. By 1974, the funding for Baraka's programs, including the Afrikan Free School, evaporated. The failures in Newark, combined with the factionalism and disillusion that followed the Gary convention, prompted Baraka to abandon black nationalism for Marxism. He began to quote from the works of Lenin and Mao, and he immersed himself in African liberation struggles. Describing this trajectory in his memoir, Baraka confessed: "The phrase 'scientific socialism' fascinated me."

In his concluding chapter, Watts affirms, with little evidence, that Baraka and his colleagues were "modern-day black clients in search of white patrons." (Watts, sounding rather like Baraka himself, goes so far as to label him "a parasite on the parent social order.") Watts's case against Baraka rests largely on his sins—his sexism, his homophobia, his anti-Semitism, and his authoritarianism, which Watts likens to "neofascism"—but that's the easiest vantage point from which to criticize him, and Watts is certainly not the first, nor the most eloquent, to do so.

What is needed is a deeper analysis of the man. Watts never gives us a sense of Baraka as an individual or as an artist—the corrosive satire in Baraka's work generally eludes him—and the reader is left wondering about the deeper roots and motivations underlying his behavior. Was Baraka, like other silver-tongued rebels of the 1950s (Mailer and William Burroughs come to mind) a literary pugilist out

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to shock bourgeois sensibilities? Was he mentally unbalanced, as Martin Duberman suggested in the 1960s? Was his career, as Werner Sollors argued, an interminable search for a "populist modernism," a black revolutionary avant-garde—and, if so, to what extent did he achieve it? Or was Baraka, as Watts asserts but never quite demonstrates, primarily driven by "his lifelong feelings of estrangement from black America"? A six-hundred-page book of this sort ought to contain an analysis of Baraka's anti-Semitism, but Watts condemns it without ever exploring its roots.

Baraka's most discerning critics have focused not on his political shortcomings, which are obvious, but his literary deficiencies. For the most part, Baraka's artistic work declined after 1974; his hate eroded his talent. Baraka himself, interestingly, seems aware of the imbalance within his oeuvre: In a poem from the mid-1960s called "leroy" he wrote, "When I die, the consciousness I carry I will to black people./May they pick me apart and take the useful parts, the sweet meat of my feelings./And leave the bitter bullshit rotten white parts alone."

WHAT ARE THE useful parts? It's too early for a definitive assessment, since he continues to write, but one can readily discern the high points of Baraka's career: the early poems, *Blues People, Dutchman*, and *The Autobiography*. "The tragedy of Baraka's writing," Greg Tate wrote in 1984, is that "he hasn't been able, like Garcia Marquez, Cortazar and Cabrera Infante. . . to radically fuse his comprehensive knowledge of Western Literature with his need to address the condition and complexity of his people." Ralph Ellison, whose contempt for Baraka was total, may have passed the 1960s on campus, far from the revolutionary gusto in Newark, but he produced a novel that will permanently endure. Baraka's finest work is barely in print, and his place in the literary canon is precarious.

Yet Baraka still has the power to surprise us. In 1996, he published an astonishing collection entitled *Eulogies*, which Watts mentions in passing but never considers at length; perhaps it would undermine his one-dimensional portrait of Baraka. I know of no other book like it. It consists entirely of testimonials that Baraka delivered in churches in New York, Newark, and Philadelphia. He pays tribute to such celebrities as Miles Davis and James Baldwin, but also to neighbors and activists—"the fighters, the advanced, the artists, the intellectuals—people discontent with things as they are." Throughout the book, Baraka's voice is unusually tender; gone, for the most part, is the Marxism and the anti-Semitism and the race-baiting. One of the eulogies is for his sister, Kimako, who was murdered in 1984 by a mentally ill man she had tried to assist. Baraka began, "The failure of all of us in here is staggering! My self, particularly, to have let my own sister, my only blood sister, expire, in brutish violence. At the morgue, my father stumbled backward, a cry broke from his lips." Baraka ended: "*Jesus Christ. Not my sister . . . .Oh No!!!*"

The Baraka who emerges from *Eulogies* is not the demonic figure depicted by Watts, but a man hemmed in by political defeat, shattered revolutionary dreams, and personal tragedy. In a tribute to Al Ryan, a California civil rights activist and lawyer, Baraka recalled the last time he saw his friend:

> We went to a bar, and drank beer and talked. We were summing things up, what had happened, what was happening, what needed to happen. And I remember, as we started to split, we stood in a parking lot, still talking, still analyzing and plotting, still caught up in the dynamic of unity and liberation, still very intense in our different ways, about Black Self-Determination. We hugged each other, like we always did . . . .We waved as I got in another car headed for the airport . . . ."Hey Man, take care of yourself," was the way Al put it. "Hey, you take care of yrself," I shouted back. So quickly our lives pass by us, let us more consciously use them.

Very early in his book, in a rare moment of generosity, Watts writes: "I thank [Baraka] for giving us a corpus of works worthy of serious engagement. More important, I salute him for living a life full of risks and the resultant bruises, regrets and bumps." A turbulent life, indeed; it's a pity Watts has done so little to illuminate it. ●

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A Dearth of Inspiration

STATE OF THE UNION:
A CENTURY OF AMERICAN LABOR
by Nelson Lichtenstein
Princeton University Press, 2002 336 pp $29.95

Daphne Eviatar

LONGTIME LABOR supporters may remember the Joe Hill ballads or Ralph Chaplin's anthem "Solidarity Forever," but years ago, the unions stopped singing them. While gospel hymns and blues ballads were giving spirit to the emerging civil rights movement, the old songs that had once filled union halls were all but forgotten by the 1960s. Alas, when the merged AFL-CIO finally got around to publishing its first songbook, the time-worn union tunes were pushed back to make room for "The Star Spangled Banner." These days, your average wage-earner is more likely to be shouting out the Wal-Mart company cheer—a sinister development Barbara Ehrenreich documents in her recent book, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*—than singing any union songs.

To Nelson Lichtenstein the death of union crooning reflects the dearth of inspiration that afflicts the labor movement today. A once impassioned cause that evoked images of placard waving marchers demanding human dignity has degenerated into a bureaucracy of union officers in business suits who lord over small but lucrative fiefdoms and an apathetic membership that's content to let the institutions do their bidding for them. It's a slide that's all the more difficult to understand because it accelerated just as the civil rights movement was on an upswing.

Lichtenstein—who wrote an acclaimed 1995 biography of former United Auto Workers leader Walter Reuther and has written and edited several previous books on labor—takes on this "great contradiction in American democracy" in his most recent book, *State of the Union*. It's an attempt to provide a new answer to the old question: Why the labor movement's demise?

Lichtenstein begins, appropriately, in the Progressive era, when "the labor question" seemed a burning one. Industrial capitalism had wrought unregulated workplaces offering long hours, low pay, hazardous conditions, and angry workers. America's laissez-faire system had caused havoc, sparking radical demands for a "living wage" and "industrial democracy." But it was the Great Depression that ignited the movement. With a quarter of the workforce out of a job, Americans came to question the very foundations of capitalism. The response was the New Deal. For the first time, the federal government set minimum wages and maximum hours and granted the right to organize and bargain collectively. Unions, many believed, would not only boost wages and consumption, but provide workers a valuable voice on the shop floor.

And the politicians of the day were on their side. In 1941, as Lichtenstein notes, Franklin Roosevelt exalted "Freedom from Want" to the level of the classic American values of free speech and religion. A "Second Bill of Rights"—to a job, health care, education, and a reasonable income—became another rallying cry. Political support for the American working class reached an unprecedented level, marked by anticapitalist rhetoric that's unimaginable today. (Recall Roosevelt's indictment of the "unscrupulous money changers" in his first inaugural address.)

But in Lichtenstein's view, labor's very growth held the seeds of its decline. Unions grew to represent one in three workers by 1953; still, Lichtenstein sees the postwar period as one of "retreat and defeat." A rigid legal frame-

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work calcified the labor movement and weakened its ideological bedrock, thwarting its ability to expand beyond that narrow scheme into a vibrant and durable political force.

By contrast, the movement toward civil rights in the workplace has been brisk. Beginning in the 1950s and taking off after adoption of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, "rights consciousness," Lichtenstein explains, has come to replace class consciousness. Today, the employment-discrimination laws and the principles underlying them are unquestioned. Their violation costs employers multiple millions of dollars and widespread condemnation. Yet violating workers' right to organize yields minimal, if any, financial penalties and barely a mention in the mainstream press.

How did this happen? Lichtenstein lays out a host of possible explanations, including the actions of unions themselves, which were not exactly models of diversity and inclusion. But for the most part, he blames the legal framework forged under the New Deal. The collective bargaining system turned unions' focus inward; it gave their officers vast powers over huge benefits funds, which encouraged corruption. It also shifted the focus away from organizing, ultimately narrowing labor's political reach.

Intellectuals of the day encouraged this fettered view. Rather than see union potential for spearheading progressive change, academics and journalists embraced the apolitical collective bargaining scheme and the model of "industrial pluralism" that supported it.

Lichtenstein acknowledges that a postwar conservative backlash imposed some practical restrictions on unions. But to him, liberals' growing view of unions as "little more than a self-aggrandizing interest group" and radicals' critique that labor had squandered its political potential were "far more demoralizing and, in the long run, politically and jurisprudentially consequential" than were right-wing politics. By the 1940s-1950s, the idea of "industrial democracy" had practically vanished from political vocabulary and union discourse. "The labor question," writes Lichtenstein, "no longer seemed much of a question at all."

By the 1960s, at "the very moment in which a rights-conscious revolution began to transform American political culture," the labor relations model laid out in the New Deal era was nearing "an ideological dead end." This view, according to Lichtenstein, "would have a vast influence on the academy, among social movement activists during the 1960s and 1970s, and throughout the judiciary, where a discourse of 'rights' soon came to have a powerfully corrosive impact on the legitimacy and integrity of the union idea."

In Lichtenstein's mind, thinkers such as Daniel Bell, Reinhold Niebuhr, John Kenneth Galbraith, and Robert Dahl dealt labor a critical blow. They accepted the turbulent ideological conflicts in Europe to mean that socialism in any form was hopeless, rejecting the broad range of ideas employed by fascist and Stalinist regimes in Europe in favor of more limited progress through interest-group politics. Management theorists like Peter Drucker saw the future in the reorganization of the corporation. Liberals like Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. expected the United States to develop into a European-style social democracy with government regulation tempering corporate greed. Such "wishful thinking," says Lichtenstein, coupled with the emergence of a related notion that work itself would lose its importance, endorsed the view that revolutionary change in relations between labor and management was no longer necessary. Interest-group politics could handle society's problems just fine.

Radical intellectuals likewise abandoned previous aspirations for the labor movement as a vehicle for meaningful change. Lichtenstein describes how C. Wright Mills, Dwight Macdonald, and Harvey Swados came to see unions as "repressive, ethically and morally claustrophobic" institutions that had failed to bring about a desperately needed transformation of American working class life.

This is an interesting analysis, even if at times it reads like an encyclopedic entry on twentieth-century intellectuals. But it's not a very convincing explanation for labor's decline. What evidence do we have that wage laborers or union leaders of the time were paying such intellectuals any mind?

Fortunately, buried within Lichtenstein's dense narrative lies the basis for a more per-

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suasive answer. In 1947, a Republican-dominated Congress anxious to curb labor's burgeoning power passed the Taft-Hartley Act. Taft-Hartley excluded supervisors from unions, prohibited organization of independent contractors, allowed states to pass "right-to-work" laws that outlawed closed-shop agreements, and expanded employers' abilities to challenge union representation. It also gave the National Labor Relations Board broad powers to enjoin union actions and outlawed critical union weapons—most notably, the secondary boycott. And, in a major economic blow to unions, it allowed employers to sue for damages for business or property damage caused by a strike or work stoppage.

Although Lichtenstein acknowledges Taft-Hartley's importance, he's most disturbed by its symbolism. To Lichtenstein, Taft-Hartley's "best-remembered consequence" was "the purge of the Communists from official union posts." But that's the least of Taft-Hartley's problematic legacies. To anyone who's ever tried to organize a union or defend its actions, Taft-Hartley's restrictions have concrete consequences on the shop floor.

Lichtenstein labels as outdated and obstructionist the entire legal framework dating back to the New Deal's National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). "The idea of collective bargaining between one union and one employer is clearly an antique notion," writes Lichtenstein. Labor contracts are "unworkable" "legalistic documents," he suggests, quoting a Chrysler shop steward. Offering arbitration to enforce contract details, the labor movement "is like a giant bar association of non-licensed attorneys," laments labor lawyer and writer Tom Geoghegan, whom Lichtenstein quotes in agreement. This backlog of "mini-lawsuits" has become the substance of "industrial self-government."

To Lichtenstein such legalisms are a travesty. What happened to the union spirit? What happened to the singing? The collective bargaining process is a failure, for it eschews the larger political questions that unionism originally intended to address. Collective bargaining between one union and one employer assumes a level playing field that doesn't exist; management always retains the upper hand through control over production—whether decisions about relocation, the use of new technology, or mass layoffs. And by narrowing its concern to implementation of a particular, firm-limited contract, the union's role becomes insular and bureaucratic. Union officials end up spending far more time administering benefits than organizing new members or politically mobilizing the ones they have. The result is a passive membership and a stagnant labor movement.

It's hard to disagree with the thrust of this argument. Sure, the American labor movement would be more effective if it were broader and more influential. If unions didn't need to worry about organizing each company, contesting employee dismissals, and ensuring the dispensation of health and pension benefits, then perhaps it would be. But that would require a European-style social welfare system, state-administered job security, and a labor party that backs industry-wide union actions. That's simply not the American way. A reform strategy needs to reckon with political reality.

Lichtenstein is not the first person to suggest that the system arising out of the New Deal has constrained union activism. Law professors Katherine Stone, at Cornell, and Joel Rogers, at the University of Wisconsin, for example, have made similar arguments. But if the NLRA framework has encouraged bloated union bureaucracies with a narrow political reach, it's also the only set of laws that provides employees the critical right to organize, bargain collectively, and enjoy the benefits of enforceable contracts.

Lichtenstein's utopian approach may be provocative for academics, but it's dangerous for union members. It's also confusing for the reader. Is he suggesting we scrap the collective bargaining system? If so, what would replace it? A collective bargaining agreement today is what separates the union member from the at-will employee at Burger King. The arbitration process, although somewhat unwieldy, is the only thing that enforces it. (It's also far more efficient than the court system.) With a collective bargaining agreement, even a part-time package handler for United Parcel Service can force the company to justify a dismissal. Under the Teamsters' contract, the package handler gets not only job security, but

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health benefits and a small but steadily growing hourly wage. That's a whole lot better than what's available to the burger flipper at the fast-food joint.

Lichtenstein argues that unions should adopt new organizing methods and re-politicize as in the 1930s. If unions would just get some of that old-time militancy, they could re-ignite the movement. But, remarkably, he never acknowledges the enormous gulf between American political culture seventy years ago and today. Yes, current work conditions are lousy—wages have stagnated, workers are insecure, and income inequality is staggering—but the situation is still far from that of the wholly unregulated economy that sparked the Great Depression. The political energy that fueled organized labor in the 1930s simply doesn't exist at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Now we have George W. Bush promising tax cuts for the wealthy, not Franklin Roosevelt pledging job security for the poor.

Of course unions should aggressively try to organize new workers, and, as Lichtenstein emphasizes, linking racial and gender equality to workplace and political rights can help. In recent years, we've seen union leadership taking tentative steps in just that direction. Lichtenstein points out that since John Sweeney was elected president in 1995, the AFL-CIO has stepped up organizing, included more minority and women leaders, and opened its arms to new immigrants. In major cities such as New York and Los Angeles, one sees unions playing significant roles in local politics, espousing both civil rights and worker rights to galvanize a diverse urban labor force. In Los Angeles, Latino workers are organizing like nowhere else in the country. In the early 1990s, the Service Employees International Union started its successful Justice for Janitors campaign and a few years later won the right to represent close to seventy-five thousand home health workers previously deemed independent contractors. In New York, unions dominated by women and minorities, such as Hospital Workers Local 1199 (now part of the SEIU), have won strong contracts and played a powerful role in local politics. And on college campuses across the country, at least some students are protesting the injustices of the unregulated global labor market.

These are all encouraging steps; but they're not widespread radical politics. Lichtenstein seems to be imagining a revolutionary transformation from our rights-based American society to one of class-based political action. But who is going to bring about that transformation? University professors? Unfortunately, American workers are not reading liberal academic journals and magazines; their political consciousness is formed by the watered-down nightly news of General Electric's NBC or AOL-Time Warner's CNN.

Perhaps Lichtenstein believes radicalism will grow out of campus teach-ins. Lichtenstein discusses one, for example, that he helped organize at the University of Virginia. As part of a campaign to raise the pay of the predominantly African-American non-union housecleaning staff, students and faculty argued against paying market wages, invoking the state's history of slave labor and chanting, "Workers Rights are Civil Rights." Lichtenstein describes the teach-in as "notably successful." But what happened to the workers' wages? He never tells us. If the campaign did nothing more than raise consciousness, then although worthwhile, such "successes" hardly support scrapping the hard-fought legal protections unionized workers have won.

The problem with this book is that it's not clear what exactly Lichtenstein is advocating. For example, he proclaims that the "ideological task that lies before workplace Democrats is to make union organization rights as unassailable as are basic civil rights." So which is it: expand and enforce existing labor rights or scrap the system?

Most of Lichtenstein's prescriptions, tossed into the book's last chapter, are difficult to discern. He concludes unions need more "militancy," "union democracy," and "politics." Militancy and democracy are fairly easy to understand, but exactly how unions can exert real political influence is an extraordinarily difficult question that goes to the heart of the problem this book attempts to address. And it's barely answered. As Lichtenstein points out, our two-party political system doesn't lend itself well to labor's interests. Although labor has long as-

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sociated itself with the Democratic Party, the Democrats' failure to push progressive social welfare legislation and labor law reform has called into question that longstanding allegiance.

Lichtenstein's response to this critical dilemma is characteristically vague. Unions can revive their previous political prominence by acting more strategically, he says. Rather than being predictable party stalwarts, labor should function as "an independent, and sometimes as a disloyal, component of the Democratic Party coalition, at least until a reassessment of its political options can take place." Presumably, Lichtenstein means labor should occasionally support Republicans, or perhaps third-party candidates like Ralph Nader. There's an argument to be made that supporting a third party in the long run will win labor more influence. But if that's what Lichtenstein is advocating, he at least ought to acknowledge that the result the last time around was disastrous: a conservative Republican administration that's implemented large-scale corporate tax cuts, rolled back worker and environmental protections, and installed right-wing judges with life tenure.

Such details, however, are less important to Lichtenstein than ideas: "If questions involving the dignity and value of work are to return to the top of the national agenda, then the organizational shape of the American trade-union movement is actually of far less importance than the ideas and ideology, the inspiration, that sustains it." Inspiration is important, but it's ephemeral without a legal structure to bolster it. With job insecurity and wage inequality on the rise, and a resurgence of patriotism post–September 11, this is surely a good time for unions to tap into existing energy and frustration to renew support for labor's cause. That includes pushing for liberalization of labor laws to expand unions' ability to organize and workers' right to protest. But this is not the time to discredit the basic bargaining rights and job protections unions have already won.

Unfortunately, collective bargaining is not an act that inspires. Hammering out the details of a cost-of-living wage increase or employer contribution to a health and benefit fund is not going to yield catchy tunes or spiritual hymns. But a contract does provide minimal rights and protections for the employees who labor under its auspices. For now, at least, that's the most tangible thing the union movement in this country has to offer. It is not enough. But those who would brush it aside should be able to at least suggest something that might feasibly take its place. ●

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Dancing in the Dark

Marshall Berman

LEFT IN THE DARK:
FILM REVIEWS AND ESSAYS, 1988-2001
by Stuart Klawans
Thunder's Mouth Press/Nation Books, 2002
xii+340 pp $15.95

AROUND A DECADE ago, the *Nation* started publishing a movie critic who not only displayed the brains, sensitivity, social conscience, and intellectual horizon that we would expect in James Agee's old mag, but who, when he was hot, burned up the page like he was twenty. In a single column, a week's copy, he could do a Hollywood blockbuster, an independent short, a European classic—Fellini, say, or Renoir; he could be a muckraker, a gag writer, a liberation theologian ("screenplay by God"), and a lyrical poet; he could make it all come together, fluidly, like a dance. It didn't take long for a cult following to grow, and I was glad to be part of it. For years many people have wanted to know, Why isn't Stuart Klawans in print? It's a pleasure to be able to give the right answer at last.

Through the years, I've become Stuart's friend, but even as I composed this Full Disclosure, I realized I didn't know much about him. I called him up and found out a little more. He is fifty-one years old; he grew up Jewish on Chicago's South Side, near the steel mills that are no more (do you know Sara Paretsky's mysteries? It's her old neighborhood); he went to an integrated public high school full of Jews and blacks; he won a scholarship to Yale, where he majored in English; he has spent most of the last thirty years in New York, writing publicity for the Museum of Modern Art while he worked on his (as yet unpublished) fiction. It was only gradually, as he joined a synagogue, got married, had a child, and approached middle age that Klawans metamorphosed into a critic. Even now, he is often forced to morph backward, to work in art publicity and public relations, in order to make a living. But his sense of identity as a critic feels fairly new—when I asked on the phone, he said maybe a couple of years old, no more—and this may help explain why his critical voice is so fresh.

Left in the Dark is Klawans's first book. It consists of fifty or so reviews and essays, going back to the late 1980s. It's a very nice-looking book, and, because Klawans talks about so many things, it would be even nicer with an index and a more explicit table of contents. The pieces are not arranged chronologically, but according to some inner code that's hard to crack. Still, as we read, we can feel an author grow.

The first great piece we see, which really pulls us into the book, is a 1994 review of Steve James, Frederick Marx, and Peter Gilbert's splendid documentary, *Hoop Dreams*. This film focuses on the lives of William Gates and Arthur Agee, two black teenagers who can play ball. They are plucked from Chicago's streets, granted athletic scholarships, and subjected to a grueling process that is designed to turn them into what one high school coach, with surprising candor, calls "professional meat." Alas, the metamorphosis doesn't work, and the young men are dropped back on the street. But they, along with their families and their girlfriends, are strong and resilient, and they keep coming back. The filmmakers show similar virtues, and decide to stay close to them over several years. A film that started out as a bankable half-hour exposé turns gradually into a quixotic two-and-a-half-hour *Bildungsroman*. For us, it is a thrill not only to see the kids grow, but, unexpectedly, to see the filmmakers grow with them. We doubt any of them will reach the heights

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of their dreams, but they all seem to be getting over as human beings.

Hoop Dreams is a remarkable film, and Klawans's essay on it is equally compelling. What is the source of its emotional power? Part of it is sheer physical location—some powerful scenes, I learned on the phone, take place at his old school. Another part, deeper if you ask me, lies in the exploration of a crucial moment in these boys' lives, and in Klawans's own: "the scholarship." Early each April, millions of American kids get envelopes in the mail. Some are thick, some thin. If yours is thin, abandon hope, or find something else to hope for; but if it's thick, it's your magic carpet out, and your life is changed forever. The April mail carries as much dread for thousands of teenaged ballplayers as it does for any intellectual. Klawans may not shoot hoops, but he knows dreams. Since some enchanted April more than thirty years ago, he has been living a life that began with a thick envelope. (I've lived that life myself; so has Noam Chomsky; so has Bill Clinton.) Once he reached the East, we can be sure he met important men who spoke loftily of Great Expectations, but who really meant something much more like "professional meat." When he describes William Gates's climactic encounter with his coach, we know something big is up. Gates says he's going to major in communications. Why? the coach unthinkingly asks. "So that when you come asking me for a contribution, I'll know the right way to turn you down." *Hey!* What went wrong with the program? That kid was supposed to turn into meat, but somehow he grew into a mensch instead. Klawans is celebrating Gates's growth, but also testifying to his own. It's one of those amazing moments when the film's subject, the filmmakers, and the author soar together.

With *Hoop Dreams*, Klawans starts close to home. But if we compare the vocation of film critic today with what it used to be, one thing that strikes us is how much farther out we've got to go into the world. Look at the great critics' books of past generations—*Agee on Film, Kiss Kiss Bang Bang, Confessions of a Cultist, Negative Space.* Nearly everything those critics wrote about was American or European, and nearly all of it could be seen on a big screen in a big city. I don't mean to denigrate those wonderful writers for provinciality. My point is that the product itself was far more provincial than it has become today. Look at the filmography at *Left in the Dark*'s end: serious films coming not only from all the places you would expect, but also from Australia, Taiwan, Finland, Brazil, Iran, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Israel/Palestine, Senegal, and I know I'm missing plenty. To write about these films with any degree of sensitivity or nuance, you have to be in touch with the political and cultural traditions of the whole world; you need to know these traditions in order to understand how films question, undercut, and revise them. Films today, maybe more than any other cultural medium, address a worldwide audience, and express an authentic "world culture." Is there anyone alive who really possesses that culture? Probably not. Still, its life as a dream has brought an unexpected golden age of world film into being.

Check out the range of places, artists, and sensibilities on Klawans's menu: This guy gets around. He insists nothing human will be alien to him, and every human landscape can be read by a mind awake. He is especially good on the cinema of a country that many Americans have a problem with: Iran. He describes the world brought to us by Abbas Kiarostami's *Taste of Cherry* (1998): "a society that consists entirely of displaced persons and menial laborers, plus one middle-class person who doesn't want to live." He mentions the movie's suppression at home; but lest Americans grow complacent, "I would prefer to talk about the suppression of Kiarostami's work in another country where I have some experience, the United States." If Kiarostami's Iranian world looks bleak, the story of its American fate is even bleaker. His work was bought by Miramax, only to be withdrawn from the market without ever being shown. Thus he "joined that cinematic Olympus whose gods are barred (though unofficially) from American screens....Hou Hsiao-hsien, Manoel de Oliveira, Chantal Akerman, Souleymane Cissé, great filmmakers all." And yet, and yet. Klawans still believes in us, in the great American audience, reveling in life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, dancing in the dark. If

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we could only have the liberty to give Iranian cinema our free attention—maybe on videotape, someday?—"Your reward, other than the experience of political virtue, might be the discovery of another reason to live."

One occupational hazard of a book like this is that it's easy for an author to feel he's drowning in his material. The author wants to let people know who he is and where he's coming from (even though he might not be all that certain himself). As *Left in the Dark* draws toward its end, Klawans makes a big play with the politics of identity: he brings a Woody Allen-esque anti-self into the game. Who is that greasy-looking guy? It's "my spiritual adviser, the Rabbi Simcha Feffeferman, leader of the Congregation Ansche Tsurres." I mentioned early on that Klawans belongs to a synagogue. In fact, it's on the Upper West Side, it's "Conservative"—which means, in Jewish terms, liberal —and it's called Ansche Chesed, "the House of Love." (Full Disclosure: my wife and I also belong there.) If a name like House of Love signifies Judaism at its loftiest and most idealized, then House of Tsurres (Troubles) must be its shadow, a ghetto full of "Yids" who are irreverent wiseguys—pushy, gross, but real.

KLAWANS AND THE Rebbe make a great team. They evoke the classic vaudeville teams as well as W.B.Yeats's "Crazy Jane and the Bishop" poems. Together they roast *Natural Born Killers*, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, and many more. The Rebbe's outfit is a perfect form of blackface for Jews. It enables Klawans to finally say things you know he's been thinking all along, like (about *Jurassic Park* 2), "Dummy! If that was true, you wouldn't have a film—just another shtick dreck for making money." Talking about *Birdcage*, the Rebbe can press forward real human existential questions, cross-dressed as throwaway lines: "Who knows who's straight? Or, for that matter, *what*'s straight?" With ten seconds left, the Rebbe sets up one of his most complex plays: he mounts the Spice Girls' latest piece of commercial fluff on top of *Arguing the World*, an ultra-serious documentary about smart Jewish boys growing old, so that they work as screens for one another. In motion, the play raises dire questions, not only about the legitimacy of Klawans's own vocation, but about the good (or bad) faith of readers like ourselves who love him:

> "But Rabbi," I protested, "how can we believe that these tough-minded social critics would fall for the Spice Girls? The New York intellectuals are defenders of independent thought as it's been enabled by our free society, whereas the Spice Girls are nothing but a marketing ploy engineered to separate people from their money."

At the buzzer, we can't make a move.

> To which the Rabbi merely lifted a shaggy eyebrow, saying, "And?"

And this great critic splits, and leaves us holding the bag. But it's a bag full of lovely images and rich ideas. There is plenty we can do with it till next season. ●

MARSHALL BERMAN teaches at the City University of New York and is working on a book titled *One Hundred Years of Spectacle: Metamorphoses of Times Square*.

RECENT AND FORTHCOMING BOOKS BY *DISSENT* EDITORS

Dissent does not review books by its own editors. To the best of our knowledge, the following is a list of books published by or forthcoming from members of the editorial board since our listing in Spring 2001.

DAVID BROMWICH, *Skeptical Music: Essays on Modern Poetry* (University of Chicago Press, 2001).

TODD GITLIN, *Media Unlimited: How the Torrent of Images and Sounds Overwhelms Our Lives* (Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt, 2002)

NICOLAUS MILLS and KIRA BRUNNER, eds., *The New Killing Fields* (Basic Books, forthcoming).

RUTH ROSEN, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (Penguin, 2001).

JAMES RULE, DEBRA GIMLIN, and SYLVIA SIEVERS, *Computing in Organizations: Myth and Experience* (Transaction, forthcoming).

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Place Matters Somewhat, But Social Class Matters Even More

Elliott Sclar

PLACE MATTERS: METROPOLITICS FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY
by Peter Dreier, John Mollenkopf and Todd Swanstrom
University Press of Kansas, 2001 349 pp $15.95

HERE IS A simple but important fact: approximately three-quarters of Americans live in metropolitan areas. Of these, about one-third live in central cities and two-thirds live in the surrounding suburbs. If you flew over these metropolises at a sufficiently low level to see their physical character you would be hard pressed to discern a coherent social pattern to the residential settlements. There would be a few small areas of unambiguous affluence and a handful of physically devastated poverty areas. But for the vast majority of residential neighborhoods there would be no easy visual clues by which to classify them.

Moving to a slightly higher altitude, you would notice a pattern to the physical density of residential settlement. There would be a higher concentration of multifamily and high-rise buildings closer to the center. As you moved out you would see combinations of row houses and single-family homes on small, tightly packed lots interspersed with smaller apartment buildings. From the middle distance to the periphery, the single-family homes would become more prevalent, larger, and stand on lots of increasing size. But even this pattern would not be uniform. Within the older settled pattern, there would be small in-fill developments of contemporary condominium "townhouses." Some of these developments would be very close to the center but they would increase in number on ever larger expanses of land as you moved out toward the metropolitan edge. Further complicating the panorama would be the fact that as metropolitan regions grew, many, especially in the northeast and midwest, came to envelop older and smaller industrial cities that are now in their midst. They too would have a pattern of high to low density radiating from their centers.

Wealth, poverty, and everything in between have sprawled out with America's metropolitan regions. In both cities and suburban towns there are extremes and expanses of working-class to middle-class residential life. The regions themselves are large and growing. In many cases the radius from center to periphery can be upward of a hundred miles. All the way to the edge the mixed patterns of residential communities repeat themselves in no easily generalizable order. Indeed the edge itself is a moving target. It is estimated, for example that metropolitan Atlanta alone loses fifty acres a day to this haphazard outward push.

The urban historian Kenneth Jackson described America as the world's first, and last, suburban nation. If Jackson is correct, and I think he is, the question is, why did we do it? Is it our culture? Is it the political economy of our unique federal/state system of government? Is it our local land use policies? Is it our federal fiscal policies? While these questions have motivated a longstanding debate among urban scholars, the answer is that all of them are implicated. The debate is really about how much each is implicated.

Place Matters: Metropolitics for the Twenty-first Century is the latest entry in this debate. It takes issue with the description I have just presented. Based largely on analyses of voting behavior, it claims to see a systematic geographic social pattern. Dreier et al. see the demarcations of place as the crucial determinants of the life of the poor. In their schema the political divide between center city and

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suburbs is a crucial social divide. Within the metropolitan suburbs they see a further demarcation between what they term older "inner ring" suburbs that they define as working class and poor and newer "outer ring" suburbs that they define as middle class.

The language of metropolitan rings that they employ derives from the 1920s social ecology work of the University of Chicago sociologists Robert Parks and Ernest Burgess. Based on studies of metropolitan Chicago, Parks and Burgess concluded that as a result of the urban land market, social classes sorted themselves out in rings in which real estate values were based on the convenience of the ring to the central business district. The contemporary metropolitan social ecology described by Dreier et al. is determined by a politics of exclusion. For these authors central cities are inhabited by poor people. Around this center are some affluent city dwellers and then "inner" suburbs, post–World War II Levittown-style tracts that are "quite depressing places." These places are depressing because they lack "public spaces, universities, cultural institutions, nightlife and downtowns that make central cities exciting places, even when they house many poor people."

SURROUNDING these pools of suburban working-class drabness are "outer" suburbs containing more affluent middle- and upper-class families.

> Exclusive suburbs, usually located at the outer edges of metropolitan areas or in the best-defended, best-located parts of the inner suburbs, are at the other extreme. Houses in these suburbs cost half a million dollars or more, and they are situated on large lots with winding roads and plenty of trees. There are usually few apartment buildings and those that do exist are luxury apartments or condominium complexes with swimming pools and tennis courts. Instead of Chevy Novas and Hyundais, the residents drive Mercedes and Lexuses. Their kids do not hang out at the mall but are shepherded from one enrichment activity to another by harried soccer moms. Teenagers know that they are headed for college and good job prospects, and they are often obsessed with clothes, makeup and SAT scores.

These descriptions are stereotypes of contemporary suburban life and not the more complex reality. Working-class suburbs may not have public universities and nightlife, but neither do the affluent ones. The authors imply that the drabness of working-class suburbs is often so severe as to be a cause of suicide among working-class suburban teenagers. What then causes suicide among urban teenagers and affluent suburban ones? They never say. Nor do they explain why giving the urban poor proximity to universities and cultural institutions is a sufficient substitute for giving them real access.

Their portrait of the suburban life of teenage affluence is also not entirely true. Affluent suburban teenagers also hang out at malls. Teenagers of all classes are often obsessed with clothes and makeup, if not SAT scores. Many of the families in these outer communities are not made up of working dads and stay-at-home soccer moms who lovingly haul the kids from enrichment to enrichment. Many families live in these places because of two wage earners working long hours. How does this lifestyle pattern differ for affluent urban kids? How do poor and working-class suburban kids differ from poor and working-class urban kids? The problem with the authors' explanation is that lifestyle is about wealth, not location.

The quote above raises an important point: not all exclusive places are at the exurban border. Dreier et al. fail to recognize that their point about well-defended, close-in communities could as easily be made in a comparison of prosperous, well-defended, gentrified city neighborhoods such as the Upper West Side of Manhattan or Park Slope in Brooklyn with depressed and working-class neighborhoods adjacent to them. The only difference is the spatial compression in which the inequities are observed. It is noteworthy that in a work on metropolitan life the authors do not deal with the phenomenon of gentrification.

Where the earlier social ecologists explained their ordering schemes as the result of a well-functioning urban land market, these latter-day scholars trace the problem to the fact that in the intervening years there has been political tampering with the self-adjusting market:

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> These place-based inequalities would be less worrisome if places, like people, experienced more mobility, with poor places becoming rich, and vice versa. According to market economics, economic inequalities between geographical areas should have a natural tendency to correct themselves. As an area becomes poor, land prices and wages should fall until they entice entrepreneurs to come back in and take advantage of the differentials. . . .we are still waiting.

And why are we waiting? Because an intransigent suburban middle class successfully hijacked a more socially integrated and economically equitable region for the past eighty years.

> By the 1920s...middle-class urbanites dismayed by the rapidly increasing density and inequality of their industrial cities, and frustrated by their inability to continue to dominate their politics, increasingly fled to the suburbs. Once they established themselves as suburbanites, they persuaded state legislatures to pass laws hindering cities from further annexation.

For most contemporary urban experts the differentials in public services, health care, and adequate housing are largely a result of economic inequality rather than a cause of that inequality. Dreier et al., on the other hand, argue that location itself is a primary cause of inequality. "The thesis of this book is that where we live has a powerful effect on the choices we have and our capacity to achieve a high quality of life."

Dreier et al. believe that poor people are becoming more concentrated in ghetto neighborhoods, forced increasingly to live in areas in which the proportion of poor people is rising. Using William Julius Wilson's formulation of the problem, they contend that these areas are not only devoid of decent housing, adequate schools, and decent public services, but that they also lack social networks and successful role models to provide poor people with alternative pathways out of poverty. As with Wilson, they believe that, although race does matter, we are dealing with a problem of politically driven social-class isolation. Their concern is that concentrated poverty is on the rise, in large part because a spatially based politics contrives to force this increasing segregation of the poor in the most deprived circumstances.

The data used to support their argument are surprisingly weak. The principal evidence for their assertion that concentrated poverty is on the rise comes from a study by Douglas Massey. Massey measured the percent of poor people living in the neighborhoods of the average poor person and the percent of "affluent people" (defined as four times poverty level income) living with the average "affluent" person. Massey's data show that in 1970 the average "affluent" person lived in a census tract in which 39 percent of the population was similarly endowed. In 1990, the comparable figure had risen to 52 percent. At the same time, the proportion of poor people living with the average poor person rose from 19 percent to 20 percent. Dreier et al. conclude from this that the percentage of poverty concentration in the poorer census tracts "increased steadily." Most statisticians would conclude that such a slight movement, about 1 percent over two decades, was meaningless. Although the authors base a great deal of their moral urgency on the asserted increase in ghettoization of the poor, the data they marshal do not make a compelling argument for the case.

It is also noteworthy that in the period from 1950 to 1970, the height of postwar middle-class suburbanization, measured concentration and segregation of the poor actually decreased. This is an important finding that they fail to pursue. To understand why, consider the other finding: the significantly increased concentration among those defined by Massey as "affluent." By applying the Massey definition of affluence (400 percent of poverty income) to the year 2000, we find that affluence for a family of four starts at an income of $70,412. Although that is high relative to the national median household income level for 2000 ($42,148), it is more accurate to call it a middle-class standard, not the standard of wealth we typically associate with affluent suburbs such as Scarsdale (median household income $178,821) and Bronxville (median household income $141,059), both in Westchester County, New York. Putting this finding together with the fact that economic segregation actually declined between 1950 and 1970, it is plausible to argue that we are not looking at place-driven inequality. We are looking at a

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downgrading in life options for the middle class and the working class that was mainly shaped by national economic and political trends.

From the late 1800s through the early 1970s, the time when American suburbanization took off and the American economy grew at an unprecedented rate, American business paid the world's highest real wages, workers organized effective unions, and political progressives created a welfare state. It was in the 1970s that the nation went into economic stagnation and the corporate attack on unions, wages, living standards, and social services began in earnest. Under Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter, the national social welfare and urban assistance programs set in place from the 1930s forward began to be dismantled. In the Reagan years America's public housing programs were gutted. Finally, under Presidents Bush and Clinton, the welfare state received its final coup de grâce. At the same time, land-use regulation, which is the major tool of local political autonomy, did not change in any fundamental ways.

Hence, what Massey is describing is not place-driven changes in opportunities but a structural change in the national economy and a concomitant shift in federal domestic policy. The working classes and middle classes are now at the mercies of the regional land market. Thus the increased uniformity of the middle class in some census tracts could be construed as the result of decreased economic opportunity and shrunken federal housing programs, not attempts by middle-class suburbanites to protect their turf from the poor. This is not to deny that such attempts did and do occur. Rather it is to say that they are not primary.

I do not think that the theoretical fight that these authors are picking is worth the engagement. Political progressives support most policy initiatives that foster equitable resource distribution. For example Dreier et al. advocate improving incomes for low-income workers through such actions as raising the minimum wage, expanding the earned income tax credit and improving health insurance. Progressives also support policies that lessen residential social segregation. In this category, the authors advocate a national policy of supporting only mixed-income housing and linking community development to regional economic development. Few progressives would take issue with any of these regardless of whether they believe that spatial isolation generates social inequality or that the larger capitalist system is the cause.

But the politics implicit in the analysis by Dreier et al. could be counterproductive and divisive. They lay the political blame for bad regional planning and urban policy at the feet of an intransigent, politically powerful, suburban "middle class" that is intent on avoiding paying its fair share to support the metropolitan regions in which its members live. While there are elements of that in contemporary metropolitan politics, it is a marginal factor. The larger problem resides in the structure of the national economy and the distribution of wealth and power. I can't imagine a more suicidal strategy than the one the authors propose. A politics based on attacking the middle class guarantees progressive irrelevance.

Consider an alternative politics not discussed by Dreier et al. Environmentalists recognize that the solution to sprawl requires more intense development in the older central cities and close-in suburbs. The least expensive land houses the neighborhoods of the lowest income populations and sits next to brownfields. Community activists in these neighborhoods understand that unless they gain some control over the development process and the brownfield cleanup process in their communities, they will be displaced by gentrification and subject to environmental risks. The primary focus of a viable coalition is affordable housing, sustainable regions, and economically integrated communities. If progressives are to be politically effective we need to build political coalitions that unite the middle and working classes. ●

Elliott Sclar is the director of graduate programs in urban planning at Columbia University and the author of *You Don't Always Get What You Pay For: The Economics of Privatization*.

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Winners Take All

Gina Neff

CROSSING THE GREAT DIVIDE: WORKER RISK AND OPPORTUNITY IN THE NEW ECONOMY
by Vicki Smith
Cornell University/ILR Press, 2001 240 pp $29.95

RECESSION'S HARSH light having awakened us from our dreams of a new economy, we're now looking bleary-eyed at what transpired in the boom-time 1990s. Opportunities seemingly abounded for the middle class to get ahead: from middle-class dreams of a share of corporate gains through stock options or 401(k)s to the "just like you and me" personas of Warren Buffett, Bill Gates, and the Beardstown Ladies' Investment Club. Like all good dreams, that of winning the stock market lottery had just enough grounding in reality to leave a vague sense of regret when it was over. Of course, as the Enron debacle shows, we're all paying for those dreams now.

Before the crash, there seemed to be nothing but a perpetual "upside" in this strange new economy. Tom Peters urged us to become "free agents" and take our chances jumping between "Wow!" projects rather than settle for the fuddy-duddy stability of a full-time job. Stock options instead of a paycheck? At one point such a gamble seemed like a savvy career move, just as people clamored to put *their* Social Security funds with their retirement savings into their stock portfolios. Dreams of cashing out early have faded, as individuals increasingly have to handle the "downside" of risk on their own. Taking risks during good times is one thing; being left completely alone in a recession is quite another.

Crossing the Great Divide is an exposé of the downside of the risk in the new economy. Vicki Smith argues that "temporariness and risk," have become intertwined with workers' expectations of opportunity and advancement, which were understood in the days of the old economy as the rewards for hard work or even dedication.

Smith questions the line between so-called "good" jobs offering opportunities, growth, and ongoing training on one side, and the marginal, dead-end "bad" jobs of low-wage work. She argues that corporate America increasingly expects workers to bear the burden of economic risks in jobs across the "post-industrial terrain," as flexibility demands all workers adapt to more uncertainty on the job, fewer benefits, and less room to advance. Although Smith wouldn't disagree that some jobs truly are "bad," she points out that privileged workers now share in many of the same elements of marginality, expendability, and insecurity as their low-wage peers. Work in general has become riskier, because "corporations no longer buffer their workers from the uncertainty of production and employment," and workers themselves "take risks and expend great personal and group resources to control that uncertainty." Smith defines two broad forms of these risks. First is in the general instability of contemporary work. Companies now provide employees with even less protection from economic volatility. Second are the costs that corporations have been sloughing off for decades—for employees' training, pensions, health care, and other benefits—and that employees themselves increasingly must cover.

Smith interviewed low-wage workers at a photocopy and mailroom services firm whose subcontracted jobs were secure as long as their firm's contracts were; unionized workers at a plywood plant undergoing "participative management" changes to stave off downsizing; temporary workers at a major computer company whose contracts can (and did) end abruptly;

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and unemployed professionals and managers at a job search club. What these workers have in common is they have what used to be good, or at least stable, jobs. But the job ladder and workplace mobility no longer extend to the mailroom, where companies have outsourced even formerly entry-level jobs. What were once stable union jobs have been retooled and are now economically riskier and less likely to be unionized. Managers and professionals once thought that their skills could protect them from long periods of job hunting. And getting one's foot temporarily in the door may not mean that you're treated like an insider, as permatemps have learned. Smith manages to compare such diverse groups of workers by examining how they all have individualized their employment situations. Work may indeed be riskier, Smith is arguing, but taking those risks is often the only option that seems available.

For example, Mike, a computer programmer in his early forties, gives this view of why he's still out of work after his layoff: "The upshot is if you manage your career well it probably won't be a problem if you get downsized. But if you get downsized out, haven't managed your career, it's probably going to be a real problem."

Like Mike, many of those Smith interviewed saw economic changes like downsizing as out of their control, but clung to the belief that they themselves had power to "manage" their way around those changes. One way they tried was to take a chance in a growing industry, and many of the workers felt frustration about figuring out where their chances were best. With all the talk about opportunities being created, Madeline, a forty-six-year-old unemployed environmental planner, echoed the frustration of many out-of-work professionals: "How can you treat this period as a period of opportunity when you don't know where to go?" Getting a permanent job these days, in the words of one of the computer company temps, is "like rolling dice. You don't know as a contract worker . . . what's going to happen, so I took a shot at it." When "taking a shot at it," means knowing where to place one's bet, work begins to look more like a gamble on the difference between a growth stock and a dot-bomb.

For all of Robert Reich's supposed "symbolic analysts" who were to have blithely sailed through the economic changes of the last decade, workers in Smith's study were struggling to keep up even during the boom. For all of Tom Peters's free agents breaking the chains of organizational loyalty, temporary and contingent work has forced many who want a "real" job to settle for something much less. The thirty-year collapse in wages, increase in insecurity, lack of job guarantees, and increasingly risky economy ventures have pushed structural economic uncertainty onto workers who now blame themselves for not being able to make it.

STILL, THE cultural remnants of the boom tell American workers to manage these risks on their own. An ideology of entrepreneurial labor holds that the only way to get ahead is by taking these chances, and failure is the result of poor career management. Making it depends not on the whims of capital markets, but on one's own efforts and knowing the difference between a Microsoft and an Enron. Take the risk, make the investment, and learn the skill, this ideology warns, or your cushy middle-class job will be as dead-end and expendable as the low-wage ones. But the ethos of responsibility for your own job means that corporations can shirk theirs. Agreeing to learn new skills while a temporary or marginal worker, accepting a job with limited mobility at a "good company," working under riskier conditions of limited benefits and guarantees mean that opportunities to get ahead—or even just to get a job—require taking more and more risks, which don't necessarily pay off. As one permatemp, a former union member who now couldn't afford to buy his own health insurance put it, "I had the idea that if you work out, you turn permanent right away. That's my idea of temporary service; I had no idea that you could be a temporary for the rest of your life."

The last economic expansion wasn't such a good period for most Americans. The American middle class entered the recession without wage increases that matched productivity gains, with historic levels of household debt, with a greater relative share of income tax burdens, and with a relatively smaller percentage

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of equity in their homes, the largest category of middle-class assets. Stock holdings might have looked good "on paper," but in general, during the boom Americans blew what raises they did get on consumption and debt service. Not sharing in the gains of the boom, most Americans now are exposed to the risks of recession. Of course, Smith's research was completed before the recession began, but including aspects of personal financial risk would have improved her account of risk and opportunity.

By looking at how middle-class and working-class jobs now share these elements of uncertainty, Smith is making an old-fashioned political economic argument. Even the so-called "good" jobs are expendable, and as long as risk-taking is seen as an individual's shot at opportunity, then the ability to see the structural reasons for this is threatened. A job well done no longer guarantees a good job, or even a job. As one of Smith's permatemps said, "I wish that one of these days that I could have a permanent job here. You know, if anything, they've bypassed us. . . . And we've really done a lot for the company, and we've shown a great amount of responsibility that we can be here and be dependable. And I would, I would love for them to just take into consideration that—that we have tried hard, and we deserve a permanent position." Looking at the ways in which the new economy boom didn't provide for workers like these—at even a blue chip computer company—may help workers demand more when the next boom begins. The only hope is that the American workforce wakes up from stock market dreams to face the fact that they deserve much more of the real credit. ●

GINA NEFF is a graduate student in sociology at Columbia University and a fellow in the Center on Organizational Innovation.

LETTERS

Whose Living Wage?

Editors:

In her article on living wage campaigns at U.S. colleges and universities ("Living Wage 101," Fall 2001), Rachel Neumann misrepresents my and the college administration's view of the well-intentioned campaign underway at Swarthmore and misquotes my comments on the subject. . . . I believe the labor markets that surround us set wages for our lower paid staff members that are below what they deserve given the work they perform and the costs of a decent life. The college is trying hard to provide to these members of our staff conditions more generous than the markets require.

At the same time, we must contend with the reality of finite resources. To the extent that allocations for staff wages exceed market benchmarks, less money is available for other expenditures central to our educational mission ranging from instruction and library to financial aid.

A committee broadly representative of our staff, with the full support of the administration, has undertaken a comprehensive review of compensation policies and recommended higher salaries for lower paid staff. We are currently attempting to locate the financial resources required. For anyone to misrepresent this effort, and its intention, only makes it more difficult for this important effort to succeed.

ALFRED H. BLOOM
Swarthmore, Pa.

Ed. note: The writer is president of Swarthmore College.

Rachel Neumann Replies

I'm sorry President Bloom felt my comments misstated his or the college's position. His letter seems to reaffirm, however, the position I attributed to him in the article. His comment that labor markets set the wages and that higher wages require cutting in instruction or financial aid is in line with what he said to me in our talk, which I quoted verbatim.

I am glad to hear that Swarthmore's committee has recommended higher salaries for the staff. I hope that my article—as members of the campaign have generously reassured me—was a help rather than a hindrance in that process.

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Change Your Name!

Editors:

As a long-time friend of the magazine who was asked to write for it by Irving Howe in the sixties, and who has been disturbed by some of the more recent issues, particularly the Winter 2002 issue, may I suggest that you change the name of the magazine from *Dissent* to *Assent*?

Surely there can be valid and worthwhile debate about the causes of 9/11 and its meaning and about U.S. policies in response. Is it necessary to show contempt for opponents of your own positions? I have admired Mitchell Cohen's editorship, but I found his hyperbolic smear of Chomsky, Said, and Cockburn offensive. Is it only the critics who are predictable? When I was writing about Dwight Macdonald in the 1940s, I thought his antiwar position bizarre, but I agreed with Robert Westbrook, who noted that his position may have been a mistake, but it was a "creative mistake" because "it freed him to openly criticize all sides in the conflict." Chomsky, Said, and Cockburn understand that this war strengthens the men of power, the national security state, and these are no small matters to any concerned leftists. To suggest that criticism is a part of the culture of excuse and apology is to demand conformity. One can challenge the arguments of Chomsky, Said, and Cockburn, but to suggest that they are apologists for terror is shameful. That Michael Kazin might even think that because he feels that the United States should address "the grievances that bin Laden and his supporters have been . . . articulating" he might be seen as an appeaser illustrates how intimidating the wave of conformity has become. Randolph Bourne noted in the spring of 1917 that the war sentiment had become a "chorus so mighty that to be out of it was at first to be disreputable and finally almost obscene." Is this what the editor wants when he demands a "morally intelligent politics"?

MICHAEL WRESZIN
New York, N.Y.

Mitchell Cohen Replies

Mike Wreszin argues that as Macdonald got World War II wrong, so Chomsky et al. got 9/11 wrong. I assent. But Macdonald's position was not at all bizarre. Like a significant (though small) part of the left, he imposed the debates of 1917 on 1940. Just another imperialist war, you know. If we can only establish world socialism, all other matters will resolve themselves. Well, I dissent. Things are a little more complex. "Creative" doesn't seem to me the appropriate adjective for the failure to comprehend the threat of Nazi Germany. I don't think it is the job of intellectuals to be free "to openly criticize all sides." What if all sides are not equally deserving of criticism? I think intellectuals need critical judgment, not formulas they reapply in all circumstances. On 9/10 you could have predicted everything Chomsky et al. would say after 9/11, and that their first bent would not be to join the mourning, but to explain how this (well, yes, tragic) event demonstrates how they were always right about everything. But for me, morally intelligent politics makes distinctions. World War II was not World War I. The Gulf War was not the Vietnam War. The "root cause" of every unhappy event is not, finally, somehow, always, the Great Satan (or, alternatively, the Little Satan).

Correction

A typo in David Rieff's article in the Winter 2002 issue changed the meaning of a sentence. The word "not" was dropped. The beginning of the sentence should read, "I do not think it wrong that the Western reporters who covered the war in Bosnia understood themselves to be documenting a slaughter in the neighborhood . . ."

CLASSIFIED

COSTA RICA: PEACE STUDIES AND PEACE JOURNALISM
Radio For Peace International and the International Center for Human Rights in Media present a ten-week study course dealing with social justice, human rights, ethics in journalism, history of racism and xenophobia in media, researching and documenting intolerance in media, radio and news production, with elective Spanish language training. Students live with a Costa Rican host family. Four overnight excursions, special activities included Session start dates for 2002: June 9, September 1. IPC, SBO 66, PO Box 025292, Miami, FL 33102. Tel: 506-205-9092; fax: 506-249-1095. www.rfpi.org/ipc.html.

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In early October 2001, grief still gripped much of the nation. Anthrax-laced letters kept the public, as well as media, in a state of acute anxiety. In this tense atmosphere, the U.S. government quietly changed its policy governing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). The president didn't ask the networks for television time. Nor did the attorney general hold a press conference. As a result, most Americans had no idea that one of their most precious freedoms disappeared on October 12.

Yet it happened. In a memo that slipped beneath the political radar, U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft vigorously urged federal agencies to resist most FOIA requests.

Enacted in 1966 and strengthened in 1974 in the wake of the Watergate scandals, the FOIA has been hailed as one of our greatest democratic reforms. Think of it as our national sunshine law. It allows ordinary citizens—journalists, newspapers, historians, and watchdog groups—to hold the government accountable by requesting and scrutinizing public documents and records. Without fanfare, the attorney general simply quashed it.

Rather than asking the heads of federal agencies to consider when the public's right to know might collide with the government's need to safeguard our security, Ashcroft instead asked them to judge whether "institutional, commercial and personal privacy interests could be implicated by disclosure of the information." Even more disturbing, he wrote:

> When you carefully consider FOIA requests and decide to withhold records, in whole or in part, you can be assured that the Department of Justice will defend your decisions unless they lack a sound legal basis or present an unwarranted risk of adverse impact on the ability of other agencies to protect other important records.

This memo overturned his predecessor Janet Reno's 1993 policy of releasing all public papers unless the government could demonstrate the potential for serious harm.

I discovered this memo in late December, quite by accident, while investigating how a FOIA request had exposed the abuse of farm subsidies. I was stunned that such a change in policy had received so little public attention. Now, months later, I am still astonished that nearly all the mainstream media have ignored Ashcroft's memo. When coupled with George W. Bush's November 1 executive order in which he gave himself the power to seal all presidential records since 1980, the crackdown on information is chilling.

In the aftermath of September 11, we witnessed a flurry of federal orders designed to beef up the nation's security. Many anti-terrorist measures carefully balanced the public's right to know with the government's responsibility to protect its citizens. Who, for example, would argue against taking detailed plans of nuclear reactors, oil refineries, or reservoirs off the Web?

Yet by the start of 2002, half the country already worried that the Bush administration might use the fear of terrorism as a pretext for protecting officials from public scrutiny.

It may be a very long time before we know how Ashcroft's memo will affect FOIA requests. Even under the best of circumstances, the government has taken years to release public documents.

For more than a quarter of a century, the Freedom of Information Act has substituted transparency for secrecy, and we, as a democracy, have benefited from the truths extracted from public records.

Because of FOIA requests, American citizens have exposed all kinds of official skullduggery, some of which violated the law. Some of these revelations have disgraced public officials or resulted in criminal charges, but that is the consequence for violating the public trust.

No one disputes that we must safeguard our national security. But we must never allow the public's right to know, enshrined in the Freedom of Information Act, to be suppressed for the sake of official convenience. And that, I fear, is what has happened.

RUTH ROSEN

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DAVID E. APTER
Globalization and its Discontents

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